



Portals

A literary journal by
Purdue University North Central students



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Portals

A Literary Journal

Purdue University
North Central
2004

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Forward

In his text, *Why I Have Not Written Any of My Books*, Marcel Bénabou grapples with himself as a writer versus himself as a reader, which of course is the same self. He confesses, "Now, however, the pleasure of writing was beginning to look to me like another side of the pleasure of reading, and a subtle exchange of tasks was even to be accomplished between these two activities now come to be of a kind" (47). Thus, Bénabou acknowledges that what he writes is intertwined with what he has read. Writing is both influenced by and a response to previous readings. Reading is the foundation of a future writer's work. Bénabou asserts that in this dialogue between writer and reader, fragments of the self are discovered in the Other.

In this year's *Portals*, Katie Anderson makes a confession similar to Bénabou's in her essay, "The Creation of a World Creator," and she gives us a demonstration of this in her poem, "Isle of Spring." Similarly, in their insightful texts of literary criticism, Terri Bartels, Angela M. Clark, and Cassandra Zurawski respond to the works of Sandra Cisneros, Sylvia Plath and Susanna Rowson, entering into the ongoing discourse of these texts. Thus, as Bénabou also asserts, *texts* are beginnings, as opposed to *books*, which are seen as closed and completed works—a key to the explication of the title, *Why I Have Not Written Any of My Books*.

As a demonstration of this ongoing discourse, Bénabou returns in his text again and again to a new beginning of what he has already begun. The return to beginnings is a resistance to closing the discourse or seeing the work as completed. With this ongoing and forward spirit, *Portals* ends this year with a section of returns, which is really another beginning, as our writers demonstrate in their texts.

The texts offered here are portals through which readers may pass and through which active readers may return as writers, discovering fragments of themselves. You, our readers, are invited to pass through the Portals of Influence and Response as well as the Portals of Return presented here with the desire that you will be influenced by these fine writers and join in the discourse.

Yet, the publication of *Portals* would not be possible without the continuing faithful support of Chancellor James Dworkin. Gratitude is also owed to Carol Connelly and Karen Prescott, who diligently prepare the edited documents for publication, and to both the English Department faculty and the Purdue University North Central students who have given freely of their time and expertise in judging the writing contest entries. However, despite all of this support, there could be no *Portals* without our active readers/writers who dare to enter the contest and the ongoing discourse. To all of the above, I express my thanks for their continuing participation in this literary dialogue.

Professor Sharon S. Koelm
Director of the Writing Contest
and Editor of *Portals*



Technology Building
Photo by Karen Prescott

Contents

Portals of Influence and Response

The House on Mango Street: Esperanza Cordero's Search for Womanhood within a Patriarchal Social System

Terri Bartels 3

The Creation of a World-Creator

Katie Anderson 11

Going to California

Eric Westforth 15

The Voice of America: For Sale to the Highest Bidder: A Look at Individual and Corporate Wealth in the American Political System

Erica M. Maar 19

This Is One Game I Will Sit Out

Belinda Wheeler 31

The Etiology of Genocide: Cautions for the Future

Brenda Green Darrol 33

The Challenge of Prison Health Care

Eric Westforth 43

Like the Plague

James Spaulding 51

Morals without Instruction: The Downfall of Charlotte Temple

Cassandra Zurawski 53

Men

Cassandra Zurawski 59

Didja Learn Anything?

Tonya M. Rogers 61

Portals of Return

Isle of Spring

Katie Anderson 65

Address Unknown

Sue Antoszewski 67

The Willow

Cassandra Zurawski 71

The Dance

John Minor 79

Smoke

Cassandra Zurawski 81

My Mother's Lover

Carol Wilson 87

An Unfolding of Sylvia Plath's "Tulips"

Angela M. Clark 89

The Room behind the Glass Wall

Kenneth Bernard 95

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Contributors 99

In Memory of
Katherine Bailey



Katherine Bailey was a much beloved and admired English major at Purdue University North Central. The news of her passing in the fall of 2003 was received by those who knew her with great sadness. Some of these friends have contributed a few words in her memory, desiring that her heroic heart not be forgotten and that her spirit of inspiration live on.

Katherine was one of the most remarkable people I have ever met. While she battled cancer for so many years, she kept a phenomenal attitude, never blaming God or the world or the Fates for her suffering. Even as her face swelled and her lovely blonde hair fell out, she remained the most beautiful of people. She embodied what is good about humanity and reminded us what faith is for.

Professor Beth Rudnick

Always energetic, effervescent, and enthusiastic, Katherine Bailey possessed a zest for learning, a positive attitude, and an eagerness to participate in intellectual debate. Despite being diagnosed with cancer, her courage and optimism prevailed. She was a remarkable woman whose spirit touched so many lives in so many ways.

Dr. Jane Rose

Kathy Bailey was a woman passionately committed to finishing what she started before her illness made it impossible for her to continue. Her heroic and successful effort to complete her English degree remains my inspiration.

Dr. Patricia Buckler



*Sculpture, Springfield Portal by Barry Tinsley
Photo by Karen Prescott*

Portals of Influence and Response

TERRI BARTELS

KATIE ANDERSON

ERIC WESTFORTH

ERICA M. MAAR

BELINDA WHEELER

BRENDA GREEN DARROL

ERIC WESTFORTH

JAMES SPAULDING

CASSANDRA ZURAWKI

TONYA M. ROGERS



*Sculpture, Emilee by Dessa Kirk
Photo by Belinda Wheeler*

TERRI BARTELS

***The House on Mango Street:* Esperanza Cordero's Search for Womanhood within a Patriarchal Social System**

A female's quest for identity becomes of the utmost importance when she begins puberty. This is a complicated time in a female's life because she is straddling the fence between childhood and adulthood. She is beginning to physically evolve into a woman but still has childish thoughts. Her mind and body are no longer in sync. This results in a sensation of being simultaneously pulled back into the comforts of childhood while being pushed into the unknown world of womanhood. To alleviate this inner turmoil, the pubescent female begins to carefully scrutinize the inhabitants of her community. In the novel, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, the author draws from her own coming of age experiences as a Mexican-American to unravel the harsh, cultural barriers that females encounter. She utilizes an eleven-year old female narrator, Esperanza Cordero, to take the reader on a journey through an impoverished, male-dominated Chicano barrio that is located in Chicago. The author's use of short vignettes, which seem like the narrator's personal diary, allows the reader to understand that if a developing female is engulfed in a cultural society that reveres the males and oppresses the females, her individuality and potential are threatened.

The reader is immediately given a clue about the theme of male-dominance, which is woven throughout the novel before the actual story begins. Upon opening the book, the first thing the reader sees is a full page excerpt from page ten. This is taken from a chapter about Esperanza's name. Esperanza explains, "It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse—which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong" (Cisneros 10). Esperanza's great-grandmother was considered to be a wild woman because she did not want to get married. Being a second class

citizen, this decision was not hers to make. The narrator explains, "my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it" (Cisneros 11). Thus, it becomes evident that the males believe they have an innate right to tame women as they see fit. Equating her great-grandmother to a chandelier clearly displays women as objects, not individuals. Women are there for the taking. Sugiyama clarifies the male approach by stating, "Esperanza's great-grandmother's marriage was a virtual rape; she was abducted by Esperanza's great-grandfather" (9). Looking back three generations permits one to understand that the roots of female subjugation run deep within the Mexican culture.

The next clue the author gives the reader is who she dedicates her novel to. Cisneros illustrates her commitment to women as she "dedicates her work in Spanish and in English "a las mujeres," an action which immediately displays her concern for the angst of the developing protagonist, Esperanza, as well as for the other women in the narration" (Mayock 223). Dedicating the novel to the women "emerges from a feminine tradition in Latin America that focuses on the formation of the woman's voice as a collective as well as an individual subject" (Mayock 223).

As the story unfolds, Esperanza, like many females, begins to notice the gender bias that surrounds her. She does not have to look far to observe it. She takes note of the fact that her brothers' existence does not parallel her own when she states, "The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls" (Cisneros 8). This alludes to the fact that "Esperanza and Nenny's cultural location is the house, the only place it is considered licit for them to interact with boys, brothers who will not acknowledge them outside this familial environment" (Mayock 223). Esperanza also states that, "Carlos and Kiki are each other's best friend...not ours" (Cisneros 8).

Esperanza also examines her relationship with her younger sister. She views Nenny as a burden, not a friend. The reason she feels this way is that she has been told that it is her responsibility to watch out for her sister's well-being. Unlike her brothers, Esperanza cannot just go outside, have fun and experience

freedom. Esperanza is restricted, and "Cisneros constructs these limits with an emphasis on the traditional Latino roles for boys and men in opposition with the dutiful (duty-full) realm imposed on girls and women" (Mayock 223). She is being trained to fulfill the tyrannical female role of caregiver. It is obvious that Esperanza resents the double standards she is experiencing when she conveys, "I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor" (Cisneros 9). Nenny is Esperanza's obligatory anchor that presently restricts her, but gender bias is the looming anchor that is capable of holding her down forever.

The gender inequity that Esperanza is now conscious of propels her into an examination of the females in her neighborhood. She observes females of all ages. They include an array of single, married, and abandoned women. The reader is taken on a walk through Esperanza's neighborhood and gets a glimpse into the long-established lifestyles of the female residents in the Chicano barrio. As Mayock states, "the scenes of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse are pervasive. The patterns of abuse reinforce the paradigm of woman as object instead of as human being" (223).

Young girls are awed by teenage girls and yearn to be as sophisticated as them. Esperanza enjoys her association with Marin, a teenage girl who looks and acts more womanly than herself. Marin takes care of her cousins while her aunt works; Marin cannot come outside "until her aunt comes home from work, and even then she can only stay out in front" (Cisneros 27). Upon getting to know her, Esperanza discovers that Marin has a boyfriend in Puerto Rico whom she plans to marry. Marin also says that if she is still living here next year, "she's going to get a real job downtown because that's where the best jobs are, since you always get to look beautiful and get to wear nice clothes and can meet someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away" (Cisneros 26). Esperanza soon sees that Marin is not so sophisticated because she depends on a man to rescue her from her controlled, confined existence. Instead of creating her own person and taking steps to change her life, she is waiting for "someone to change her life" (Cisneros 27).

Neighbor Rosa Vargas is an abandoned woman whose "kids are too many and too much" (Cisneros 29). Esperanza explains that Rosa is "one mother

who is tired all the time from buttoning and bottling and babying, and who cries every day for the man who left without even leaving a dollar for bologna or a note explaining how come" (Cisneros 29). Rosa cannot properly raise all her children alone, yet that is the position her husband has placed her in.

Minerva "is only a little older than Esperanza but already has two kids and a husband who left and keeps leaving" (Cisneros 84). She endures a vicious cycle of ongoing turmoil as her husband leaves, then returns, only to abandon his family again. While he is home, he physically abuses his wife. She falls into the battered wife syndrome and forgives him repeatedly.

Rafaela is beautiful and young but is stagnating because of her controlling husband. The neighbors only see her on Tuesdays because "her husband comes home late because that's the night he plays dominoes" (Cisneros 79). When he goes out, "she gets locked indoors because her husband is afraid Rafaela will run away since she is too beautiful to look at" (Cisneros 79). Rafaela spends her Tuesday nights leaning out the window and dreaming of a better life. Although she is young, she is old enough to comprehend that life is passing her by.

Another young woman in the neighborhood, Alicia, lost her mother. Her mother died, and now it is her duty to take on her mother's role in the family. It is her responsibility to care for her father, his children and his house. She is a freshmen in college because "she doesn't want to spend her whole life in a factory or behind a rolling pin" (Cisneros 32). Hopefully she will be able to fulfill her goal of making something of herself, but it is a difficult road she travels as she tries to balance her required household duties, classes and studies. The fact that her father does not approve of his daughter's decision to further her education, coupled with her fear of him, could also negatively impact her plans for the future.

Ruthie, Edna's Ruthie, is a grown woman who is mentally impaired, but she was not always without her mental faculties. She remembers times when she used to write children's books and was offered many jobs. She made a decision not to live up to her potential and instead took on the traditional female role of wife. Ruthie is currently staying at her mother's house waiting for her husband, who will never arrive, to come take her home. She is another abandoned

woman. It is implied that blunt trauma damaged her mentally when she says, "I can't read anymore. I get headaches" (Cisneros 69). It is no mistake that she is called "Edna's Ruthie" (Cisneros 67). Now that she is damaged goods, she has been shipped back to her mother's house because her husband no longer has a need for her.

Esperanza's own mother tells her daughter, "I could have been somebody" (Cisneros 90). Esperanza's mother "used to draw, but now she sews. She can speak two languages, sing opera, and fix a television, but doesn't know which subway train to take to get downtown" (Cisneros 91). She tells her daughter that, "shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains" (Cisneros 91). Esperanza's mother is letting her daughter know that she had potential but let her aspirations slip away from her.

Then there is Sally, "another one of Esperanza's contemporaries, who has flashes of potential but fears the constant sexual abuse imposed by her father" (Mayock 223). Sally is not allowed to go outside. She is confined to the house because "her father says to be this beautiful is trouble" (Cisneros 81). Sally lives up to her father's prophecy and enters into a life of promiscuity, which results in her being covered with black and blue marks that are put on her flesh by her father. Sally's solution to her disturbing dilemma is to get married "in a state where it is legal to get married before eighth grade" (Cisneros 101). Like the countless victims before her, and the numerous victims that will follow in her foot steps, Sally discovers that her impulsive marriage provides her with neither the protection nor freedom she was seeking. Her husband turns out to be more abusive than her father. She simply "exchanged one repressive patriarchal prison for another" (Sugiyama 9).

Esperanza becomes a victim of her male-dominated culture in the saddest way possible. Her innocence is ripped away from her in the most violent, demeaning act a female can undergo. She is raped. This occurs during a time in her life when she has not even experienced her first kiss. When the rapists steal her virginity, her childhood illusions about sexual encounters being romantic, caring and loving are shattered. This horrid attack on her whole being took place at a carnival she attended with her friend Sally. She was

chosen as a victim merely because of her connection to promiscuous Sally. The controlling males who committed this inhuman crime, justified it by stereotyping Esperanza by association. One cannot help but see the correlation between Esperanza and her great-grandmother. They were both helpless victims of aggressive males who view women as objects that are there for the taking.

Esperanza and her great-grandmother share the same name, but not the same meaning of the name. Their name "in Spanish means sadness, waiting, while in English it means hope" (Cisneros 10). Although both females have endured suffering at the hands of violent, domineering men, Esperanza's great-grandmother's life exemplifies the Spanish meaning of her name. She spent her life trapped in sadness and waiting. The time period in which Esperanza, the narrator, lives offers her a chance to escape her restraining environment. Her life personifies the English meaning of her name. Her hopes and dreams of one day leading an unrestricted, happy life are within her reach.

During Esperanza's quest for identity, it becomes apparent to her that the oppressive atmosphere she has been living in will always be a part of her when she articulates, "One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from" (Cisneros 87). This parallels to Cisneros's statement about her parents' house, "I realize this is the household that created the writer" (Satz 166). Esperanza now realizes that her negative life experiences are as much a part of her identity as her positive ones. She recognizes that all of her life experiences will help to shape her into a strong, independent, and flourishing woman.

Esperanza becomes determined to chart her own path in life and become her own person. She rebels against what she witnesses and "decides that she will not grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain" (Cisneros 88). She begins to come into her own power when she realizes that, "I have begun my own quiet war. Simple. Sure. I am one who leaves the table like a man, without putting back the chair or picking up the plate" (Cisneros 89). Her refusal to conform shines through as she dreams of the house she will one day own, "Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With a porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage

to pick up" (Cisneros 108). Esperanza longs for a home that will provide a sanctuary from the brutal conditions of the male-dominated Chicano barrio. She knows that she would surely suffocate if she were only allowed to breathe the stifling "man's" air. Her ideal house is a reflection of her desire for freedom and individuality.

A sure sign that Esperanza has entered maturity is that she understands her Aunt Lupe's advice to "just remember to keep writing. It will keep you free" (Cisneros 61). She realizes that writing will free her from oppression. Esperanza now understands that writing will not just free her from the tyrannical Chicano barrio; it will free her inner self. Like Cisneros, Esperanza's "reason [to] write is...to get the thorn out of the soul of [her] heart" (Satz 166). Esperanza has set optimistic goals for herself and will one day own a home that she can utilize to accommodate her objectives. She will own "a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem" (Cisneros 108). Esperanza has discovered that writing provides her not only with a coping mechanism but also with a window to her soul. She no longer straddles the fence between childhood and adulthood. Esperanza has gained the power to cross over to the side of womanhood.

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*Sculpture, Aligning with Kathryn by Derick Malkemu:
Photo by Karen Prescott*

KATIE ANDERSON

The Creation of a World-Creator

The first thing I can remember writing was a letter to my mom that said, "I hate you mom. Love, Katie." I wasn't much of a writer growing up, as you can probably tell—only six words and already a paradox. I was more of a reader, and I think that reading is what inspired and created the writer in me.

I still have all of the Dr. Seuss books I read as a child. His fantastical worlds were so interesting to me, and I devoured every sentence, every rhyme, every poem. Things like "tweedle-beetles," and green ham filled my mind with ideas, and I was very imaginative, but mostly I just absorbed the ideas of others with regularity. The Ice Cream Cone Coot became my best friend. My mom would buy me books by Bill Peet, and we would read them together. My world grew with the addition of sea serpents named Cyrus and dogs who wished they were something other than a dog. I started to draw pictures of capybaras and gryphons, and these were summarily posted on the refrigerator for public viewing.

When I was in junior high, I would buy books through the school's monthly book order program. One day I received a book called *The Hero and the Crown* by an author unknown to me. This was Robin McKinley. She fashioned a world of unlikely dragonslayers, red-headed king's daughters, and swords named "Gonturan." I finished the book by the time I went to bed that evening, and then I began to write. Not at first, but shortly after, trickles of poems and short stories made their way to the school's literary magazine and my teacher's desks.

I discovered Shakespeare not long after that. I read the first play that almost every young person does and became involved with the struggle of *Romeo and Juliet*. I was fascinated with the language that was so foreign, yet so beautiful. "Thee," "thou," and "thy" became understandable to me. I joined the English Academic Superbowl team and discussed Ursula K. LeGuin with my friends and teachers. We would make jokes about escapism on the way to a competition and draw pictures of our team, misspelling the name of our school in an attempt at humor. Usually we were the only ones laughing, but we had a good time.

High school encouraged the fledgling writer with creative writing assignments about brown pants and term papers about beluga whales spouting words like "Delphinapterus leucas." I always got an "A," and praise from the teacher for my descriptive skills. This was when I remember thinking that maybe I was good at this. Maybe I could actually do this for the rest of my life and be happy.

I joined 4-H at the age of twelve, entering a cake and a drawing into the county fair. Cake decorating was always a hurried event, since the frosting would spoil if left too long. My fellow decorators and I would have to spend the night before the fair spreading and squeezing and eating frosting off the tips of our fingers as we decorated our horse- or baseball-shaped cakes. We learned words like "buttercream," and what it means when your project is selected for the state fair. Choosing a career in high school is something that few people do, but I knew from the 4-H experience that my career would have something to do with farming.

As the years passed, our farm blossomed. We started out with a few rabbits and some chickens, and soon it became a flock of sheep, two cows, thirty rabbits, four goats, ten horses, fifteen turkeys, and a pig named Gertrude. I had to learn where all of the eight sweat glands are on a lamb, and how to trim hooves. I learned that sheep poop is stinkier at noon than it is at six a.m., but the sheep are louder. When I was older, I taught others how to show a sheep or a turkey, and they, too, had to learn how to tell a judge what breed the sheep they were holding onto was while making sure it didn't run away or chew a hole in their shirt.

Sawdust and straw gave way to dorm rooms and cafeteria food when I went to college. I swam in a current of students on their way to class and missed the simplicity of farm life. Sororities and term papers cluttered my life with regularity, and spare hours were difficult to find. I often hid from my sisters in an effort to save my sanity. I could only be the designated driver so many times, and discussions of who wore what to the last function were low on my "to do" list.

So I concentrated on my algebra homework but still found time to read before I went to sleep every night.

Anne McCaffrey was my savior in college. I discovered her in the library at my high school in between sheep shearing and geometry and have been an avid fan ever since. I almost lived in her creation, Pern, and closing the book every night was difficult. Sometimes I would read a book three and four times, squeezing every detail out with my eyes and clinging to the images her words had left in my mind. Moreta made me cry, and every time the Rowan spoke with her lover, I held my breath. I wanted to be able to sway people that way. I wanted to be able to create and destroy and influence and so I continued writing. I wrote poems and short stories and plays until my fingers felt like they would fall off. And every time I wrote something, I tried to put a little bit of myself on the paper because it didn't feel worth writing if it wasn't worth giving of myself.

I have never attempted publication. The thought of thousands of people pouring over my work, criticizing it, dissecting it, and picking it apart haunts me. I write for the sheer pleasure of it. I write because if I didn't pour the ideas out of my head onto a white sheet of paper, they would drown me. I write because sometimes it is easier to watch the words appear than it is to say them. I write because people love to read.

I still read the same books now as I did then and still laugh and cry with the characters as I traverse their worlds made of an author's imagination. But I create my own worlds now.



*Sculpture, The Journey Begins, by Michelle Coldstrom
Photo by Karen Prescott*

ERIC WESTFORTH

Going to California

Last year I had the good fortune to be able to take three trips to the west coast: two to California and one to Washington. Although this was my first time to these states, I have always been attracted to the West. I am a lover of the outdoors, so the western United States, with its pristine beauty and geological wonders, has always held a certain appeal and mystique. I had seen much of Colorado and Wyoming, but nothing could have prepared me for the Pacific Coast with its rocky shorelines, imposing mountains and temperate rainforests. As if the natural beauty were not enough, the region is also replete with rich culture and history, especially in California. California, to me, was almost mythic, existing only in movies, music and books. It was a land of unequalled beauty and unparalleled culture. It spawned some of my favorite bands, like the Doors and the Grateful Dead. It was sanctuary to some of my favorite writers, like Jack Kerouac and Hunter S. Thompson. The idea of this magical place was so ingrained in me that I almost felt it had always existed inside of me, like a part of my very psyche, the warm, open, expressive, inquisitive component of my personality gestalt, the part most alive and most free. Obviously, I was very excited about going there. Of the many places I saw there, one of the most impressive was San Francisco. It was by far the most beautiful city I had ever seen. To me, it represented all that was enchanting about California.

My friend Skip and I flew into San Francisco for a northern California tour last summer. The two days we spent in San Francisco were definitely a highlight. We had a hotel room south of the city, right on the bus line that ran downtown. Our first morning there we got on the bus and headed into the city. Despite the presence of palm trees, the city tends to be colder than southern California and can sometimes be downright nippy, but this day was warm and sunny without a trace of the famous fog that enshrouds the city for much of the year. At one stop on the way, a young boy got on the bus with his mother. He had a copy of *Where the Wild Things Are* under his arm, and he asked the driver, "Will you take us where the wild things are?" The driver smiled as the

boy's mother shuffled him to a seat, and I remember thinking, *You'd better believe it*. Riding through the city, I was impressed by its colors. The buildings were all white, beige or pastel, so different from the dank darkness of Chicago. The landscape was also fascinating—the way the city conformed to the hills it was built on. Some of the streets were so steep I wondered why anyone would build a city there. It would never work in a place with snow.

After the bus ride, we experienced the famous trolleys and streetcars for the first time. We explored Fisherman's Wharf, ate Thai food in Haight-Ashbury and bought little Buddhas in Chinatown. After all this, we stumbled upon city hall completely by accident. It was one of the most impressive buildings I have ever seen. A large part of old San Francisco was built with gold rush money, and city hall was no exception. The domed structure was covered with lavish gold designs on a dark background. We were drawn to the building to get a better look. As we approached it, we came upon a most disturbing scene. In the courtyard, strewn across benches and laying unconscious in the shade of stately rows of trees, were more homeless people than I have ever seen before, languishing in the shadow of supreme opulence. It was an unforgettable sight, and a sign that this place was far from perfect.

Exploring San Francisco, we could not overlook its most well known landmark, the Golden Gate Bridge. We decided to get up close and personal and walk the one and a half mile sidewalk across it. The bridge itself was fascinating. Employing art deco design, it is the perfect combination of strength and style set against an amazing backdrop. The views of the city were incredible. Down in the bay, ships came and went and windsurfers and kiteboarders utilized the incessant winds coming off the ocean. By this time, the sky had clouded over, and the temperature had dropped. The wind on the bridge was biting, and I, while having enjoyed the walk, was happy to reach the end in Marin County. Unfortunately the bus that supposedly stops there was not running that day, so we had to walk all the way back. We were exhausted and decided to end the day at an old theatre we had heard about that played obscure films. The theatre was round and everything from the walls to the ceiling was gold. It was breathtaking. We saw a movie called *Siddhartha*, based on the novel by Hermann Hesse, about a man searching for enlightenment

during the time of Buddha. It was the most interesting cinematic experience I've yet had and a great end to a great day.

Even though I had such high expectations of California, I cannot say I was at all disappointed. It proved to be the most fascinating and engaging place I've ever been. It gave substance to what had previously existed as a dream to me, and, while proving to be a real world place with real world problems, it, nevertheless, did not shatter the somewhat innocent, idealistic image I had created of it. In discovering California, I had, in a sense, discovered a part of myself. Jim Morrison said, "The West is the best. Get here, and we'll do the rest." I think I now know what he meant by that.



*Sculpture, Windfighter by Thomas Scarff
Photo by Karen Prescott*

ERICA M. MAAR

**The Voice of America:
For Sale to the Highest Bidder
A Look at Individual and Corporate Wealth
in the American Political System**

In U.S. politics, the wealthy wield much of the power in government affecting who runs for office, how legislation is created or voted on, and, thereby, diminishing the voice of Americans without access to vast amounts of money. Since colonial times, the affluent have maintained political power through a system of laws and policies legitimized by ideologies. Originally, these laws withheld voting rights from the majority of the population, but with suffrage reform, the late 19th century elite learned that they could devalue the vote through campaign financing, which directly funnels their money into politicians' pockets. Under the control of the affluent, the American political system makes an ideal setting in which to sustain trends that favor a few while ignoring or even exploiting the rest of the population, especially the poor.

In understanding how the wealthy became the ruling class in a democracy, a look back in history is essential before examining their power today. Data from various government and other agency sources can then determine how America is doing socially with the affluent at the helm, setting the priorities for the nation.

The roots of affluent control in America began in England over four hundred years ago when joint stock companies, composed of merchants and gentlemen, decided to seek riches in the new world (Tindall 49). The companies sent representatives with settlers to establish a system of order that would enable them run a lucrative export business. As a result, the expeditions formed colonies in which political participation was limited to those who had a stake in the land and, therefore, a stake in the pursuit of wealth. The colonial constitutions reflected who those people were: property owning, white male colonists.

For example, the Fundamental Constitution of North Carolina, drawn up in

1669, allowed only white men who owned 50 acres of land to hold office and required that all freemen pay an annual tax to vote (Conley and Kaminski 428). In Rhode Island, even their voting population had to own property. The owner and the eldest son who met the requirements could petition the assembly to obtain voting rights (Conley and Kaminski 144). The colonial constitution of Georgia required assemblymen "to be an adult Protestant owning 250 acres of land or property worth 250 pounds" (Conley and Kaminski 454). All other individuals who fell outside the realm of assemblyman status were left out of the political process and had few rights, if any.

Following the Revolution, political rights for Americans continued to reflect those previously established by the British colonies. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, delegates set strict parameters for citizenship. Blacks, women, indentured servants and the "propertyless mob of sailors, vagrants and criminals" could not vote (Collier and Lincoln 70). In fact, only about 10 % of the population were deemed suitable as voters.

The elite used ideologies to support this mass disenfranchisement. In regard to the propertyless, white male, Thomas Jefferson assumed they were uneducated and opposed giving them a voting ballot. "He favored government for the people but not by all the people—only those men who were literate enough to inform themselves and wear the mantle of American citizenship worthily...The ignorant, he argued, were incapable of self-government." (Bailey and Kennedy 184)

While Jefferson believed education eventually would enable all white men to vote, women and blacks were condemned by the ideology that they were biologically inferior to men. However, in the case of blacks, some delegates felt this ideology was not strong enough to justify the institution of slavery. When some delegates stated their belief that slavery was "dishonorable to the American character," John Rutledge of South Carolina, as quoted in Judith Baer's text, replied:

Religion and humanity have nothing to do with the question (of slavery). Interest alone is the governing principle with Nations...If the Northern states consult their interests, they will not oppose the increase of slaves which will increase the commodities of which they will become the carriers. (55)

Not willing to risk splitting the country in half, those opposed quickly acquiesced to the capitalistic fervor of the South. Rutledge's words illustrate how the power of capitalism can ignore morality and block reform if it impedes the pursuit of wealth. By controlling government so completely that ideologies were not even necessary to justify their actions, the elite demonstrated their power as a ruling class.

As a result, 90 % of the population was effectively silenced and subjected to whatever the elite imposed on them to further their own gain. When the disenfranchised groups eventually gained political freedom, the elite had already begun to find a more effective means to undermine the political power of the American voter. The wealthy merely had to pay politicians a "donation," and in exchange, the politicians would represent their interests. Given the mutually beneficial nature of this arrangement, the Americans without access to large coffers could not hope to compete for representation without money to back up their voices, especially as a new power elite player was ushered in on the heels of industrialization.

The Industrial Revolution of the late 1800's created enormous wealth for the country's corporations. By using their profits to influence government officials, corporations emerged as the most powerful political force in American history. The new elite—now comprised of corporations, business tycoons, and wealthy individuals—initially bribed and bought departments of government resulting in scandals such as the election of President Rutherford Hayes. In the 1876 presidential election, Samuel Tilden won the popular vote, but the "decisive electoral votes were claimed by both sides in an orgy of ballot-stuffing" (Jezer and Kehler 2). The party leaders negotiated with the railroad tycoons, resulting in the Compromise of 1877. Hayes was awarded the presidency, and in exchange, Southern Democrats were permitted to segregate and disenfranchise their black population. The northern capitalists could then obtain government subsidies to fund a transcontinental railroad (Jezer and Kehler 2).

In 1890, radical farmers and organized labor began to form a movement of solidarity, challenging the power of wealth (Jezer and Kehler 2). The elite recognized the threat and banded together, financing the same political candidates to strengthen their weakening political control. A major victory for

capitalists occurred with the 1896 presidential election campaign of Republican William McKinley. McKinley's campaign manager, industrialist Mark A. Hanna, raised funds by "assessing corporations a percentage of what he perceived to be their worth" (Jezer and Kelher 2). He was able to raise 6 million dollars in donations, ten times more than the opponent raised, ensuring a victory for McKinley. The corporations not only won that election but established their power as a united front.

During the 1970's, campaign finance reform was brought before the Supreme Court of the United States in an effort to curtail its influence over the political process. The court ruled that contributions to candidates should be limited so as not to be used as bribes, but the court also said that campaign spending was a form of free speech and, therefore, protected by the First Amendment. In regard to the question of a candidate using his or her personal funds for campaigning, the court felt that was also allowable because it is impossible to bribe oneself (Pope 2).

The wealthy ensured two victories with this ruling. First, the affluent who want to run for office have the financial advantage over those candidates further down on the socioeconomic ladder and second, the elite can contribute as much as they want to campaign committees who in turn finance the candidates. The term soft money has been given to this practice because dollars indirectly find the way into the politician's pocket through party committees, as opposed to hard money, which is contributed directly to the candidate.

The ideology that capitalists use to justify this situation can be best summarized in the words of the post WWII chairman of General Motors, Charles E. Wilson, "What is good for our country is good for General Motors and vice versa" (qtd. in Jezer and Kehler 3). Yet this system of power is in direct conflict with democracy according to sociologist, Seymour Lipset. He states that a democracy needs to meet three criteria: first, a "meaningful competition" among candidates and political groups needs to occur; second, there must be a "highly inclusive level of political participation" during elections and policy making; and third, the level of "civil and political liberties must safeguard "the integrity of political competition and participation (qtd. in Marks and Diamond 43). American history clearly demonstrates that these standards have not been fulfilled with the elite's financial influence.

In 2002, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 was passed with the intention of loosening the grip money increasingly has over the American political process. The new laws prohibit "political parties from using soft money to fund many party-building activities" (Michigan Dept. of State 2). The laws also prohibit soft money from funding advertisements for candidates sixty days prior to a general election and thirty days prior to a primary election (Michigan Dept. of State 2). While the bill has many specific restrictions, it has not completely banned soft money. Therein lays the crux of the dilemma. Without a complete ban, the wealth's power base has not been eradicated. They must merely navigate around this most recent bump in the road and maintain the steady stream of dollars into the coffers.

In fact, that appears to be exactly what is happening. Despite the new laws, money continues to flow into the political candidates' bank accounts at record speed. President George W. Bush, a prime example of fundraising success, has a reported \$130 million sitting in his campaign financing account and expects to raise \$70 million more ("George W. Bush" 1). Lobbyist groups and special interests continue to "show their support" to various candidates and appear to have managed to raise large amounts for the various presidential candidates. It remains to be seen if they will be hindered by the new laws at all.

Prior to the 2002 legislation, campaign financing records were being set by the political parties in hopes of gaining control of power. In 2001, the Republican Party Committee raked in \$97.4 million in soft money donations, breaking *all* previous fundraising records (Common Cause 1). This would be a non-issue if every American was able show the same level of support for their candidate, but in actuality, only one-quarter of 1% of the population contributes more than \$200 to political parties and only 170,000 people contribute more than \$1000 (Silfry 2). With money as a prerequisite for political power and participation, a meaningful competition is impossible when only 170,000 citizens meet the criteria. The elite's power is almost absolute as illustrated in the 2000 Congressional elections, when the better-funded candidate won 85% of the time in the Senate and 95.6% in the House (Silfry 2). If a candidate fails to represent the donor's interest, the money flow stops, and, given the statistics, they will most likely lose the election.

This system clearly violates Lipset's idea of democracy. First, a meaningful competition can not occur when politicians are forced to march to the beat of the elite or lose their funding. Second, the Supreme Court failed to safeguard the integrity of political competitions when it ruled that money is a form of free speech, thereby, giving the affluent the loudest voice in America. Third, inclusiveness in elections and policy making is clearly lacking when elite interests rule government, leaving the masses without much power to affect change.

The failure to meet Lipset's standards for a true democracy results in significant ramifications to society. With government acting in the interests of only a few Americans, the interests of capitalism are nurtured and maintained with excruciating attention to every economic statistic while important social issues are rarely reported and usually treated as a non-issue. Poverty, homelessness, inadequate education, and the lack of healthcare are all issues that more affluent Americans feel justified in ignoring. Early in life, Americans are taught they can achieve anything, even the presidency, if they just work hard enough. This ideology clearly places the burden of success on the individual, even if, for some, success means just a meal and shelter. Those who fail in such an "open society" do so by their own shortcomings and should live with the consequences.

By justifying the nation's social shortcomings, attention is diverted from these issues and refocused on the economy. If corporations have a healthy bottom line, if the country's gross domestic product increases and if companies are expanding, all Americans will gain access to a better life through increased employment opportunities. While this utopian dream never bares enough fruit for everyone, a thriving economy usually satisfies the needs of most middle class Americans. The elite dismiss those who miss the boat to the American Dream as a lazy group of people, unworthy of notice, such as Ronald Reagan's "welfare queens."

On the surface, the theory that the elite's economic success equates to America's success appears validated. The country experienced the economic boom of the 1990's in which unemployment decreased and most citizens appeared to be content; however, social indicators paint a different picture of the nation's well being.

An issue that one would expect to improve in a healthy economy is a narrowing of the income gap between the rich and poor. Using constant dollars, the weekly income for the American worker has actually steadily declined from its high of \$315 in 1973 down to \$256 in 1996 (Miringoff and Miringoff 99). Profits are being made, but they are not going back into the pockets of the worker. In solving the mystery of where the money is going, one can examine how the percentage of income has increased or decreased for the various classes. Table 1 breaks down the total income for the United States into percentage categories, going from the highest family income to the lowest. The amounts under each year reflect the percentage of the total income that each of the five categories earned for that year.

Table 1: Breakdown by Percentages of Income Earned

Economic Categories	1970	1980	1990	1999
Highest 5%	15.6%	14.6%	17.4%	20.3%
Highest 20%	40.9%	41.1%	44.3 %	47.2%
Next to Highest 20%	23.8%	24.4%	23.8 %	23.0%
Middle 20%	17.6%	17.6%	16.6 %	15.6%
Next to Lowest 20%	12.2%	11.6%	10.8 %	9.9%
Lowest 20%	5.4%	5.3%	4.6 %	4.3%

Source: Marger, Martin. Social Inequality: Patterns and Processes. 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw, 2003.

The table shows that the elite are increasing their income shares, especially the top 5 %, while every other income bracket shows a loss. The end result is a widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasing the inequality in the nation. Furthermore, blaming the poor for their low income numbers does not agree with the results of a 1999 Rutgers University study indicating that "...only 24% of the working poor want to work less, compared to 58% of

other workers...24% of the working poor said they wanted to work more, compared to 12% of other workers" (Buell 1). Rutgers concluded that large numbers of working poor and unemployed are seeking a better life and want to work for it (1).

Another indication of the social health of the nation is the level of child poverty. This is a serious problem in the United States and getting worse. In 1996, 22.7% of children under six were living in poverty, a 37% increase since 1970 (Miringoff and Miringoff 81). The Department of Health and Human Services released a report stating that between 1975 and 1993 the proportion of children living in extreme poverty (family income is less than half the official poverty line) has doubled from 5% to 10% (Miringhoff and Miringoff 83). In comparing child poverty with other industrialized nations, the United States stands alone with the widest gap between its poorest and richest children (Marger 78).

In addition to economic hardship, more and more Americans lack the protection of healthcare. In 1976, 10.9% of the population were uninsured; that number has grown to 15.6% in 1996 (Miringoff and Miringoff 94). If the corporate bottom line has grown, why are the numbers of uninsured Americans increasing? One answer is the changing economy from industry to service work. Many service jobs have reduced benefits; the most significant gap being no health insurance. Since these jobs are often low paying, this becomes a double-edged sword as there is no way for these people to afford the high expense of medical care. This often results in delaying treatment, receiving little preventative treatment and a higher mortality rate.

While there are many other issues of social importance, the three in this paper clearly illustrate that America's success is hiding many sad realities for an increasing number of Americans struggling within the current social structure. With the elite controlling government, these statistics go unchecked because the correlation that a good economy leads to successful society clearly conflicts with the very nature of capitalism. To improve the income gap, poverty, and healthcare would require the affluent to give up a share of their income, which the nature of capitalism forbids. According to theorist Karl Marx, the capitalists must exploit the worker. If capitalists pay workers too much, then their position of power would be weakened with other capitalists (Marger 202). The ruling

class of capitalists must constantly increase their profits because to do so increases their power.

Through the elite's constant desire for more wealth, social structure is maintained. Those born to wealth inherit the advantages that position brings, while those at the bottom inherit the disadvantages that position bring. Given the previous three issues, the life chances for children born into the lower classes are severely impaired. Children in low income families probably will live in a low income neighborhood. As schools are funded by their community, the chances of those children achieving academic excellence are minute compared to the children of the elite. Children without healthcare suffer with poorer health as care and drugs are expensive. Poor health crushes life chances for all children, but the poor are less able to overcome the odds due to inadequate treatment and prevention.

Children in poverty face perhaps the worst life chances. The published results of Jay MacLeod's study, *Ain't No Makin It*, finds that children raised in poverty lack the resources and understanding of how to overcome the odds. The isolation of impoverished communities surrounds these children with failure and few answers. MacLeod looked at the aspirations of the teenage boys in these communities and found there were few. Some boys refused to form aspirations because they already felt rejected by society. The others bought into the American ideology that success is determined by the individual's effort, but their attempts to learn and achieve success were without direction and guidance. They would graduate but lacked the knowledge of how to access mainstream society.

By not addressing these issues, the elite keeps amassing wealth and their power is maintained at the top of the social structure. The relationship between wealth and politics must end if Americans want government officials to represent their needs, not the donors. Completely ending campaign financing eliminates their major power source and makes Lipset's concept of democracy more easily attainable. The public financing of campaigns has been suggested as the best way to reform the system. If the public pays for campaigns, the politicians no longer answer to just a few but to all Americans. Furthermore, anyone worthy of political office can run, not just the millionaires. Unfortunately, the very words "public funding" send the elite running in the other direction.

While Marx's hope of overthrowing the capitalists is dim, democracy does leave the potential for reform through class solidarity. A major obstacle to this process is the American ideologies of individualism which hinder the formation of "klass fur sich" (a class for itself) mentality that Marx says is necessary to form powerful movement (Marger 204).

However, even in the face of ideological obstacles, the very nature of capitalism makes reform inevitable. As the elite's greed increases their percent of income shares, all other Americans will suffer from tightening economic conditions. Eventually, the masses will recognize the unity of their condition and demand a more equitable form of government in which the elite take a backseat to the public's needs. Only then can America truly be a "... government of the people, by the people, for the people."

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Photo by Belinda Wheeler

BELINDA WHEELER

This Is One Game I Will Sit Out

He is a soldier, physically fit, with a serious expression on his face. He looks like a powerful individual dressed in his warrior suit, helmet in hand. His partner, who is not wearing a warrior suit, looks more relaxed as he leans up against the back of a poolside deck chair. They are both cartoons. With a cheeky grin the partner gives the two human girls over by him the "you know you want me" look. Both males gaze down towards the two women lying back on their poolside chairs. The women—one a brunette, one a blonde who happens to be filing her nails—are good looking, skinny, and look sexy in the skimpy black bikini outfits they are wearing. They are lying on white towels laid out on their chairs, which highlights their long, slender, suntanned legs and the black high heels they are wearing. Furthermore, the expressions on their faces imply that neither one of them has a thought between them.

All four are on the same page together. The males are up on the top right hand corner of the page, while the two women are left of center. From the left they diagonally continue up the page, starting with the first woman and leading up to the authoritative soldier at the top right hand side. The women may be the attention grabbers of this advertising campaign; however, the message of who is in control is left in no doubt.

This advertisement is for the new "Jak and Daxter" game for Sony Playstation 2; however, the reader would be forgiven for missing it. Sony's product name and logo are barely noticeable on the top left hand side of the page. The game they are marketing, "Jak and Daxter – The Precursor Legacy," is written in orange on the bottom right hand side of the page over a brown background, making it very difficult to read. The remainder of the text is written in fine print on the bottom left hand side and reads, "A new legacy is born. In the hero community you have two types: those that fight evil and those that happen to be around while others are doing the fighting." It then continues, introducing the two male cartoon characters, 'Jak' the warrior and 'Daxter' his partner.

This advertisement uses typical chauvinistic stereotypes of women and

men, even cartoon men, to sell its product. It displays the men as the protectors, powerful saviors and providers who are focused, physically fit, and authoritative. The men are portrayed as the dominant gender that does all the work. They have no time to lie around the pool, but appear, however, to have enough time to stop by and leer at the two beautiful women. The women in this campaign are portrayed as weak, lazy, no brained individuals who have nothing better to do all day than laze around the pool in their high heels and file their nails.

In viewing this advertisement and reading its captions, the consumer is left with the view that women are nothing more than objects reserved for visual and/or sexual pleasure. They are also presented as objects that do not contribute anything to society except their looks. This is particularly disturbing as Sony's primary target audience is young males who often see themselves as the characters they play.

This advertisement presents a very grim view of men and women's roles in today's society. Has Sony forgotten that women can, and do, make an exceptional contribution to the world everyday? If Sony feels that this advertisement for its product "Jak and Daxter" displays a true reflection of how today's society views males and females, then this is one game I will be glad to sit out.

BRENDA GREEN DARROL

The Etiology of Genocide: Cautions for the Future

Physically removed from the mass atrocities we witness through technology, our American populace shakes its head in collective bewilderment at man's inhumanity to man. It seems inconceivable that a civilized society could subject fellow human beings to such mass annihilation and humiliation. Despite moral outrage and the denial of personal capabilities, a critical examination of the etiology of genocide reveals that few are immune when both social and psychological circumstances enable previously unrecognized violent behavior to emerge.

In response to the Holocaust of WWII, the United Nations General Assembly drafted Resolution 260 (III) on December 9, 1948. Titled the "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," it recognized that all periods of history included genocide and that international co-operation was necessary in order to liberate mankind. It further stated that genocide, whether in peacetime or war, was a crime; it included acts against a national, ethnical, racial, or religious groups (1).

Specifically listed acts included killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions calculated to bring physical destruction, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations 1). Besides the act of genocide being punishable, the resolution included *conspiracy* to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, and complicity in genocide (1). It is interesting to note the title of the document includes the term "prevention" of genocide but fails to address what social and psychological forces exist that foster its development.

History is littered with examples of grand scale slaughter. The leaders were gifted orators able to exploit social and economic circumstances; they either silenced the area's "moral entrepreneurs" or used them to bolster their own views; they were also able to effectively control the mass's access to independent media. In order to understand the personal psyche that fuels a tyrant's agenda, it is valuable to discern whether any commonalities exist during their formative years.

Slobodan Milosevic orchestrated the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia after galvanizing Serbs into a "rabid ethnic nationalism" (Doder and Branson 3); his early years were marked by shame and later by the suicides of family members. Milosevic, born in 1941, grew up in the small town on Pozarevac, not far from Belgrade. In 1948, while communism was still being thought of as Utopia by the Yugoslavian Partisans, its leader, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, took his country out of the Soviet bloc (Doder and Branson 15). Perhaps disenchanted, Milosevic's beloved uncle Milislav, a Partisan war hero and senior general in Titos' military intelligence, shot himself through the head. (Doder and Branson 15). Two years later, Milosevic's father, a defrocked Orthodox priest, abandoned his wife and two sons and returned to Montenegro to teach Russian; failed marriages were a stigma in Serbia at that time (Doder and Branson 15).

Milosevic was a good student, serious and self disciplined, not interested in sports; he finished high school at the top of his class. At school he met future wife Mirjana Markovic, believed by some to be his only girlfriend. Markovic was scarred with the knowledge that her mother was tortured and executed for supposed collusion with the Nazis (Doder and Branson 18.) While at the University in Belgrade, Milosevic was noted to have a talent for manipulation and political survival; he was good at organizing rallies, mobilizing students for volunteer work, and patiently networking (Doder and Branson 21). In 1962, suffering from depression, his father committed suicide. Milosevic was in Russia and did not attend the funeral (Doder and Branson 24). Clearly intelligent, he finished law school in 1964, with an average of 8.90 out of 10; his lowest marks were in pre-military education, which involved a measure of physical ability (Doder and Branson 24).

Milosevic became an economic advisor for the mayor of Belgrade for three years, completed his military service, and returned to be appointed in 1968 as the chief of the information department of the city government; it is likely there that he acquired his propaganda skills, particularly noting the power of the media and the way to control them (Doder and Branson 25). During his later work as president of Beobanka, the country's largest state-run bank, he began learning that he had the power to charm and flatter, to disguise his true intentions and ambitions (Doder and Branson 26). Clearly, Milosevic was skilled in using interpersonal skills to advance his political career. This was critically

important when dealing with people who had power over him or were useful to his agenda.

In the 1980s, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population was growing, and the Serbs were concerned. Milosevic was appointed Communist Chief of Belgrade and began to change the party's relationship with the media. He assembled loyalists around the Commission for Information, which had the full authority for staffing positions in the state media (Doder and Branson 25). By 1986, he was Chief of the Communist Party. Popular novelist Dobrica Cosic and others from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts circulated a memorandum that claimed Serbs had been shortchanged by the Communists (Doder and Branson 36). It specifically noted that Kosovo exemplified the "physical, political, legal, and cultural genocide of the *Serbian* people" (Doder and Branson 37). When faced with the task of calming an angry crowd, Milosevic found that traditional party responses did not work; instead, his promise that "No one will ever dare beat you again!" galvanized the assembled mass and strengthened his popularity. By the end of 1987, he ruled Serbia. Neil J. Kressel, author of *Mass Hate*, posits that the Serbs responded because they felt history had treated them unfairly, and they feared other groups would persecute Serbs if given half a chance (31). Not only did the Serbians feel they were bearing the weight of history's injustice, but they also sought to prevent future injustice.

Milosevic's coronation ceremony included the attendance of bearded Orthodox bishops seated high so that the nearly two million attending could conclude their approval. His speech was interrupted by chants from the crowd recalling Tsar Lazar, who in myth made a moral choice to seek a heavenly empire instead of an earthy one. Lazar suffered defeat through the Turks, and the myth maintains that compromise is not good; it calls for avenging the injustice of Kosovo (Doder and Branson 5). Thus, his political rhetoric combined with the tacit approval of the church helped fuel support for his future policies. Sadly, it led to the death of an estimated 238,000 people (Kressel 14).

On another continent, Cambodian Pol Pot took power in April of 1975 and directed the deaths of his countrymen through starvation, torture, and execution. A peasant's son, Pol Pot was born Saloth Sar in what was French Indochina; he worked on a rubber plantation and studied to become a Buddhist monk (Wouters 1). Although less is known about Pot's early familial experi-

ences, the family apparently was estranged. Pot's brother, Saloth Nhep, had not seen him since the 1960s ("Pol Pot's Relatives" 1). In fact, it was not until nearly the end of the Khmer regime that Saloth Nhep realized that the infamous Pol Pot was his brother. He, like others, had been a victim of Pot's forced labor camps ("Pol Pot's Relatives" 1).

Aligned with Ho Chi Minh's resistance movement, Pot joined the Communist party. Despite winning a scholarship to study radio electronics in Paris, he failed his examinations three years in a row (Wouters 2). Some consider his clandestine Communist activities to have taken more importance than his studies. In 1953, he returned to Phnom Penh, joined the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea, and wrote articles for left-wing publications (Wouters 2). Despite the lack of a degree, he was able to teach history and geography at a private school.

After French withdrawal from Cambodia in 1954, Pol Pot opposed Norodom Sihanouk's leadership. His involvement in the Cambodian Communist Party led to his fleeing to the jungle and founding the Khmer Rouge guerilla force. The guerillas then waged warfare against Lon Nol (Sihanouk's successor), and the 1970 U.S. involvement against Cambodia fueled sympathy for Pot's cause (Wouters 1). Pot took power in 1974 when Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh.

As part of his plan to create a utopian, agrarian society, Pot's forces immediately transformed the country. They emptied cities, burned books, shattered temples and destroyed symbols of Western technology (Wouters 2). They abolished property and money; they executed thousands of professionals. Not unexpectedly, only radios were untouched in order to communicate the rhetoric of "Angka Loeu," Organization on High (Wouters 2). Except for those devoted to political indoctrination, schools were closed; children age 5 and up were expected to work in the fields or factories (Wouters 3). Pot directed a campaign against "*potential* enemies" (Kressel 204). People considered to be undesirable were put to death: physicians, people who spoke a foreign language, even people who wore glasses. (Wouters 3). It is estimated that nearly two million lost their lives. Clearly, Pot targeted academics for death; perhaps this was a way of eliminating his own shame at having failed his examinations at University three times.

In 1978, at the height of Pot's power, British reporter Elizabeth Becker became one of the few Westerners to meet Pol Pot. Accompanied by American journalist and British academic Malcolm Caldwell, they met at the former palace of the French colonial governor (Becker 1). Pot sat at one end of a huge meeting room, and the journalists were seated at a notable distance. Pot did not rise to greet them; in a soft voice, he lectured them for over an hour. They were not permitted to interrupt or question him. Becker noted his impeccable dress and the delicacy of his hands (Becker 2). She thought him insane; his atrocities were well known, but he firmly maintained that he could convince the US, Europe, and most of Asia to support him (Becker 3). Like Milosevic, he could appear temperate when it suited his purpose. Later that night, as they slept in a government guesthouse, armed soldiers threatened Becker and murdered Professor Caldwell. Like Milosevic, Pot could appear composed and rational when it suited his purpose; conversely, he was ruthless and could appear irrationally violent.

Although Pol Pot and Slobodan Milosevic led horrendous assaults on humanity, a discussion of genocide must include the atrocities Adolph Hitler and his followers committed against the Jewish population. As a result of his infamy, psychoanalysts have scrutinized Hitler's early life. Some feel that although he publicly respected his father, privately he hated him; perhaps Hitler was mired in the Oedipus complex (Kressel 111). His father, Alois, married Hitler's mother, Klara, when she was twenty-four years old and pregnant; Alois was her senior by twenty-three years. Alois Hitler had been born as an illegitimate child who, through hard work and discipline, rose from lowly circumstances to a more prestigious position in the Austro-Hungarian customs service (Fromm 415). Alois is commonly known to have been violent toward his wife and sons. Although a few academics question the existence of familial physical violence, most historians do conclude that Klara had been a loving mother. However, several theorists point to her overindulgence of her first-born son and to her concentrated interest and affection as problematic. Erich Fromm specifically posits that:

Her attitude very probably built up his narcissism and his passivity. He was wonderful without having to make any effort, since mother admired him anyway; he did not have to make an effort because

mother took care of all his wishes. He, in turn, dominated her and threw tantrums when he felt frustrated. (417)

Conversely, he also questions whether ". . . her over-attachment may have been felt by him as an intrusion toward which he acted with increased withdrawal . . . the basis for his semi-autistic early attitude" (Fromm 417).

Although Hitler's father was often absent from the home during Hitler's preschool years, his father retired and spent more time at home as his children began their formal education. Probably in response to the home environment, Alois's oldest son (from his first marriage) left the family home at age fourteen; the farm was sold (Fromm 422). Stern with his family, Alois could be "angry and disgruntled" (423). Successful in primary school, Hitler, nevertheless, failed miserably in his classes in secondary school. He later rationalized his inadequacy as an attempt to get his father's permission to be an artist (429). His academic failures led to the necessity of repeating his first year; he often was forced to repeat examinations in order to advance to the next class. It could be inferred that Hitler refused responsibility; it may also suggest a passive form of rebellion. Alois died when Hitler was fourteen.

In 1907, Hitler went to Vienna to study painting at the Academy of Arts. Although he passed the first part of the entrance exam, he failed the second part. In a later attempt, he again failed it. While Hitler could rationalize his failure in secondary school as an effort to become an artist, he had no such excuse to hide behind in Vienna. According to one theory, the knowledge of Hitler's narcissistic nature, coupled with his public failure, provides an explanation for his attempt to change the reality of his failure; it must be blamed on outside forces.

Another explanation, postulated by Thomas Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger, focuses on the violence of his father and his mother's failure to protect him. They offer that, "Klara, as much as Adolph, was tyrannized by her husband, but she offered obedience and respect in return" (36). They also consider Hitler's shame as manifest in his relationships with women; his sexual preferences were peculiar. According to Scheff and Retzinger, "he practiced a type of perversion in which both he and his partner were humiliated . . . he demanded that his partner urinate on his face" (37). Eerily, at least six of the

women who had sexual relationships with Hitler attempted or completed suicide (Scheff and Retzinger 33).

On the public front, Hitler joined the Nazi party in 1919 and began to develop his oratory skills. The group initially sputtered and was outlawed; Hitler even spent a night in jail. By 1929 the group was again a legal organization and had grown to 100,000 members (Kressel 115). Its growth could be attributed to smoldering resentments from Germany's defeat in WWI, widespread unemployment, and the economic deprivation of the country. Like Milosevic, Hitler was able to create a rabid nationalism and fuel animosity toward out-groups by using rhetoric that emphasized the perceived injustices of history, by raising the possibility of future threats, and by stimulating a thirst for revenge.

None of the infamous leaders appears to have had a healthy close relationship with their families. Both of Milosevic's parents committed suicide, as did a beloved uncle. In addition, his father had deserted the family. Less is known about Pol Pot's circumstances, but his name change suggests some type of hidden shame. The fact that his own brother had not seen him for decades and was unaware of his kinship to the despot provides further observations of the fractured relationship with his family. Hitler's early life was also dysfunctional; though overindulgent, his mother did not protect the children from their abusive father. Indeed, one son responded by leaving home at just fourteen years of age.

Neuroscience explains the relationship between early experiences and affect; the growth of a child's prefrontal cortex is in response to the environment and is use-dependent. This center of rational and analytic thought typically modulates areas of the brain responsible for excitatory processes; however, children who experience abuse may incur stronger reactivity of the "lower" areas of the brain. (Karr-Morse and Wiley 159). Developing after birth and shaped by each person's unique experiences, the cortex lays the groundwork for future response; when a child repeatedly perceives a threat, it can result in the hindered development of this important locus of control. For the young child or infant, being faced with overwhelming fear or having unmet needs answered with pain leads to either hyperarousal or dissociation (Karr-Morse and Wiley 162).

Sociologist Charles Cooley equally supports the importance of primary group influence on later behavior. He suggests that the family and friendships, through their intimate, face-to-face interaction, give us an identity (qtd in Henslin 104). James Henslin stresses that we internalize their views and they "become a lens through which we view life" (Henslin 104). This may explain the feelings of unworthiness the three men experienced.

Additionally, each of the principals experienced failure and shame in the public arena. As a young man Hitler failed miserably in his school examinations; he couldn't even gain entrance to art school. Milosevic's contemporaries viewed a father's desertion as shameful, and he spent his childhood avoiding the appearance of poverty. Pol Pot lost his scholarship due to repeated scholastic failure; he also rejected his original name of Saloth Sar. Membership in or aspiration to specific reference groups provides a standard for people to evaluate themselves; accordingly, it is not difficult to link public failure to inner turmoil.

James Gilligan, author of *Violence*, offers an intriguing approach to study personal and public destructiveness. Using his training as a physician, he argues for a "germ" theory of violence; he suggests that the pathogens to investigate when attempting to discern the causes of malignant violence are *emotions* (104). In particular, he considers shame and perceived injustice to be precursors to violent eruptions. His work with violent offenders in the prison system lead him to conclude that "when men feel sufficiently impotent and humiliated, the usual assumptions one makes about human behavior and motivation . . . no longer apply" (110). Gilligan uncovers the idea that because our idea of self is inextricably intertwined with our cultural experiences:

. . . a perceived threat to the integrity and survival of a person's culture is perceived as a threat to the integrity and survival of the individual's personality or character, and to the viability of one's ethical value system . . . what most intimately links the self and its culture. . . reasons why the death of one's culture is tantamount to the death of one's self. (97)

Expanding on that idea, Max Kressel believes that there are predictable steps that enable a group to develop a murderous mindset. He asserts that a process of psychological preparation precedes genocide: the reinvigoration of nationalism, intensification of a culture of toughness, reactivation of historical

resentments, and stimulation of a desire for revenge (31-32). The actions of Milosevic, Pot and Hitler buttress his theory, but he fails to include the use of dehumanizing labels attached to the out-groups in order to linguistically undermine their humanity.

Critical examination of genocide illuminates both the psychological and sociological components of this ultimate travesty of (perceived) justice. Not only does the individual need to feel worthy of respect, but the group's identity also needs to be intact. When either or both of the identities experience repeated fractures of self-concept, they become ripe for the eruption of "justifiable" violence. Since theories of violence reflect attempts to fulfill universal human needs, they do not preclude the future occurrence of genocide. Failure, shame, and humiliation are threads that appear repeatedly in theories of violence and genocide; unless individuals and their group identities perceive that they are accorded a measure of dignity, the world may indeed experience another perdition.

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ERIC WESTFORTH

The Challenge of Prison Health Care

In the cramped cell of a maximum security prison, an inmate carefully threads a needle with dental floss and then pushes it through a tube of toothpaste, covering the floss with paste. He is not just practicing good oral hygiene. He knows that the paste contains a mild abrasive, and with this modest yet ingenious tool, he will eventually saw through the steel bars that imprison him. Although he will never make it off the prison grounds, his diligence and resourcefulness serve to illustrate an important point. There are unique challenges involved in providing health care to prisoners. Whether dealing with escape attempts, efforts to "game" for pain killers, or absurdly high rates of infectious disease, prison medical services face many issues not commonly seen in the private sector. Although the very environment being operated in does not seem conducive to providing care and despite the fact that while one branch of prison staff is consumed with caring for inmates, another is focused on punishing them, prison health services do their best to provide care that is both effective and efficient. This can be quite a balancing act; one that has received criticism of leaning more toward cost-cutting than toward quality. However, with organizations such as the American Correctional Association (ACA), the National Commission for Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), and the state Departments of Correction (DOC) providing oversight, contract monitoring and medical service directives that provide a blueprint to every health situation, the system has made great gains in insuring quality care for each and every inmate.

Despite the attention prison health care receives today, it was nothing more than a fringe concern just thirty years ago. A study done in the early 1970s by the AMA found that fewer than thirty percent of prisons had any kind of medical facility (Hylton 44). The prison uprising at Attica State Prison in 1971, spawned by poor conditions and lack of care, brought the problem to the country's attention, and eventually the Supreme Court would pass measures ensuring that the medical needs of the incarcerated are met. In *DeShaney vs. Winnebago County Social Services Department*, the Supreme Court ruled that

the state is responsible for providing for the basic needs of prisoners because it has denied them the ability to provide for themselves. Also in *Estelle vs. Gamble*, the Supreme Court ruled that deliberate indifference to a prisoner's medical needs is a violation of the Eighth Amendment, which guarantees protection from cruel or unusual punishment (Cohn 252).

Today, prison health care is a \$3.6 billion-a-year business that consumes seventeen percent of prison budgets (Levine 44; Shinkman 18). Prison health care providers must deal with providing care to a country with the highest incarceration rate in the industrialized world, monitoring and attempting to diminish the threat posed to public health by the twelve million inmates released each year who typically have rates of HIV, hepatitis, and tuberculosis that are up to twenty times greater than the general population (Strickland 109; Levine 45). Delivering the highest quality care possible is a goal complicated by the unique set of circumstances related to prison practice.

The challenges to providing health care in prison are plenty. One very important issue is demographics. The majority of the nation's inmates come from poverty. This translates to a population that has been undernourished and uncared for medically, coming in with unaddressed, pre-existing conditions that have gone unnoticed or ignored. They have engaged in high-risk behaviors that increase the odds for disease, and they continue to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as tattooing and unprotected sex, that spread disease like wildfire. Somewhere around eighty percent are drug addicts. They exhibit disturbingly high rates of psychotic and mood disorders including depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (ISP). This is most certainly a high maintenance population in need of serious care for serious afflictions.

Further complicating the issue is behavior. Prisoners often engage in behavior that can be quite troublesome to medical staff. They frequently lie about problems they are having for various reasons. One is to get drugs. Drug-seeking behavior is a daily occurrence at many prisons, with prisoners faking a wide range of injuries and illnesses to score controlled substances (O'Connor). Some even study the symptoms of mental disorders in order to receive a diagnosis that will entitle them to prescriptions for psychotropic drugs to be used or sold to other inmates (Bonkoski). They will also fake medical emergencies. One inmate at the Porter County Jail faked eight seizures (O'Connor).

These fake emergencies may be for attention, for a sense of regained control through manipulation or possibly even for an escape attempt. In an emergency, the patient is usually taken off-site to an area hospital, providing a small chance for escape, but security measures such as straps and guards make that unlikely. False emergencies may also be simply for a change of scenery. The possibility of a trip to the infirmary or even to a hospital may tempt an inmate on lockdown to fake an illness, as he or she is in desperate need of stimulation and may find that the attention and relief from boredom provides sufficient warrant to fake illnesses or emergencies (ISP).

Prisoners may also fake illness to avoid having to work (Bonkoski). Diane O'Connor described faked illness as the biggest challenge to her medical staff. Weeding out the fake from the legitimate emergencies can be a trying, frustrating process, one that consumes time and resources that might otherwise be better invested in treating authentic illnesses. Other problematic behaviors include theft of medical supplies or simply using common items for purposes other than those intended, such as the inmate at Indiana State Prison who escaped from his cell using dental floss. A syringe used to administer medication or draw blood could be stolen and used for IV drug use, and any sharp object could be turned into a weapon. At Indiana State Prison, needles and scissors must be counted three times a day (ISP).

Another issue facing prison health systems is turnover and availability of staff. The prison environment can be a difficult, frustrating, and depressing place to work. One former prison psychologist described "having urine thrown in his face, being threatened with a cup of HIV-positive blood, and subjected to repeated threats of physical violence" (Strickland 108). Another psychologist said his overwhelming caseload was due to the high turnover rate (ISP). It is no wonder that many people find prison a less than desirable place to work. This poses a problem to the medical facility, which is often the busiest department of a jail or prison (O'Connor).

The final challenge to prison medical staff, and arguably the most poignant, is the incongruity of health care and corrections. The term prison health care may almost be oxymoronic, given the incompatibility of punishment and care. Prisons are comprised of two elements—custodial and medical—that, at least symbolically and quite often realistically, are at odds with one another.

Although custody takes precedence, as the primary objective of a prison is simply to contain criminals, custody must also comply with medical directives, never denying a prisoner his or her medical rights. Likewise, medical must conform itself to fit within custody's pre-established framework. Conflict here is inevitable. How does a psychologist convince prison officials to take a depressed convict off lockdown? What if the depression is a natural side-effect of the prisoner's hepatitis treatment? How does a psychologist attempt to teach convicts self-esteem when correctional officers treat them like dirt? How is emergency response hindered by security concerns? These questions and many more can checker the relationship between custodial and medical personnel and further complicate medical personnels' ability to treat prisoners.

Despite so many challenges, prison medical services do their best to effectively practice medicine inside prisons. There are measures instituted to maximize quality and minimize waste. One such measure is co-payment. Co-payment helps to minimize fraudulent claims of illness by charging a small fee, usually from five to fifteen dollars for initial doctor's visits and prescriptions. This may seem like nothing but can be enough to discourage lying for a prisoner who may only make sixty-five cents a day (ISP). Healthcare Service Directives are another way to maintain quality and efficiency. This idea was originally pioneered in Oregon, where a prioritized list of illnesses and treatments used to eliminate guesswork in Medicaid decisions was applied to the prison health care system. Treatments were ranked according to necessity, effectiveness, public-health benefit and cost, helping to establish a good balance between quality and efficiency (Levine 46). In Indiana, Healthcare Service Directives operate in much the same way as those measures used in Oregon and provide a blueprint for every healthcare situation (ISP). Quality is also assured through accreditation. The ACA and the NCCHC both provide accreditation for correctional health care providers. This is a way to ensure that certain quality and ethical guidelines are followed, while also helping the providers to maintain an acceptable level of efficiency. Most private health care contractors are contractually obligated to meet quality goals, and accreditation is a means to ensure these goals are met, increasing the likelihood that their contracts will be renewed (Shinkman 21). DOC also provides a contract monitor to determine whether quality standards are upheld (ISP).

An increasingly popular way to assure quality of care is to use outside contractors. Twenty-five percent of prison health care is now provided by private contractors, correctional HMOs that trade care for fixed monthly payments (Shinkman 19). These companies can provide care much more efficiently than the states' DOC. Often an entire state will contract with one of these companies, as is the case in Indiana with Prison Health Services (PHS). PHS saves Indiana an estimated twenty-five million dollars a year, while providing a higher quality of care than was possible under DOC. They provide medical, dental, and mental health services to inmates and do as much on-site work as possible. They own the pharmacy that provides the medication, which significantly cuts costs. They employ experts on HIV and hepatitis, which are known to plague prison populations, and offer off-site trips to Wishard Memorial Hospital in Indianapolis for those requiring surgery or a specialist. PHS has been characterized as possessing a level of professionalism and prestige that DOC never did. They have trimmed the fat from prison health care and instituted more effective and efficient policies. They discontinued the free care and comfort items inmates got under the DOC but raised doctor's salaries to attract more qualified doctors and cut medical request response time in half (ISP).

Although accreditation bodies and the DOC provide contract monitoring and quality control, correctional HMOs have been the object of many scathing articles claiming that the efficiency exhibited is due in part to neglectful and unethical policies. One criticism is that little is done about the hepatitis C plague roiling inside prisons. There are problems in treating hepatitis C, however. The treatment itself poses risks of severe side effects such as depression, bleeding, fever, and circulatory problems. Dealing with these side-effects may be pointless because the treatment is only fifty to sixty percent effective (ISP). To further complicate the issue, the treatment is extremely expensive, costing as much as twenty-five thousand dollars a year per patient (Levine 45). Westville Correctional Facility alone has six hundred hepatitis C patients, which means that to treat all of them would cost fifteen million dollars a year, far more than that system spends on its entire health care program (ISP).

A far more disturbing development has been accusations of extreme negligence. There have been many accounts of malpractice and preventable deaths that occurred under the watch of another correctional HMO, Correc-

tional Medical Services (CMS). Although the U.S. Justice Department has kept an open file on CMS, no formal charges have been brought against the company. However, it has been reported that the company routinely hires physicians who have lost their licenses or been involved in malpractice suits, and some of these physicians have been implicated in wrongful death suits while with CMS. More prevalent are the accusations of inmate needs being ignored, with treatment for everything from poisonous spider bites to broken bones being stalled or denied. The company is accused of putting profits over human lives, and in this era of corporate greed, these claims certainly resonate with the public. Most claims remain unsubstantiated, however, and many would argue that the rate of malpractice inside prisons is no higher than that outside prisons. Prisoners have hurt their own cause as well, as an inordinate amount of frivolous tort claims are filed every year, which does little for prisoner credibility.

The challenges of prison health care are many, and the debate over just how well providers are meeting those challenges continues. While correctional HMOs tend to be in a better position to provide for prisoners' health needs than correctional facilities, some would say that also puts them in a prime position to take advantage of their "captive audience." Means of assuring quality care, such as accreditation, are in place, and it is certainly in the health care provider's best interest to conform to quality standards, yet stories of malpractice continue to leak out. I have heard stories from many points of view, from prisoners and prison staff alike, stories that, more often than not, completely contradict each other. I feel that without the experience of being a prisoner, I may not ever fully understand the situation. For now I will have to trust my impressions of my most personal experience with prison health care: the three hours I spent interviewing staff inside the clinic at Indiana State Prison. The environment I saw was not one of neglect, abuse, or corporate greed, but rather empathy, understanding, and compassion.

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*Sculpure, Off-Minor by Richard Heinrich
Photo by Belinda Wheeler*

JAMES SPAULDING

Like the Plague

Tyrants try for peace, drops of rain
sting the cheeks of our children in
the streets, as clouds of carnage
form high on mortal
mountaintops.

The wind blows in from the east
bringing gain in exchange for love,
and life, and dreams of long ago.
Our babies dance in droves of
broken glass, and fires blaze the
last chance they will ever have to
join hands, swing, and sing those
songs we never remember.

But those kids somehow summon
up their last breath of courage,
mount up on wings torn from
untimely landings, and they join
hands in the streets.

Spinning and turning, jumping and
skipping, laughing through chards
of broken glass in our rubble.

Dark feet, light feet, covered in
crimson blood.

Our children dance together in a
storm. Crisp melody rings loud in
our ears while echoes of crunching
glass under children's dancing feet,

bloody feet, torn feet, shiver upon
our spine.

They force their playful songs,
trying to hold on.

The rain comes down in torrents
now, as plumes of silver smoke rise
high to make clouds above the
rubble, overlooking those neighbor-
hoods we held in contempt for oh
so long.

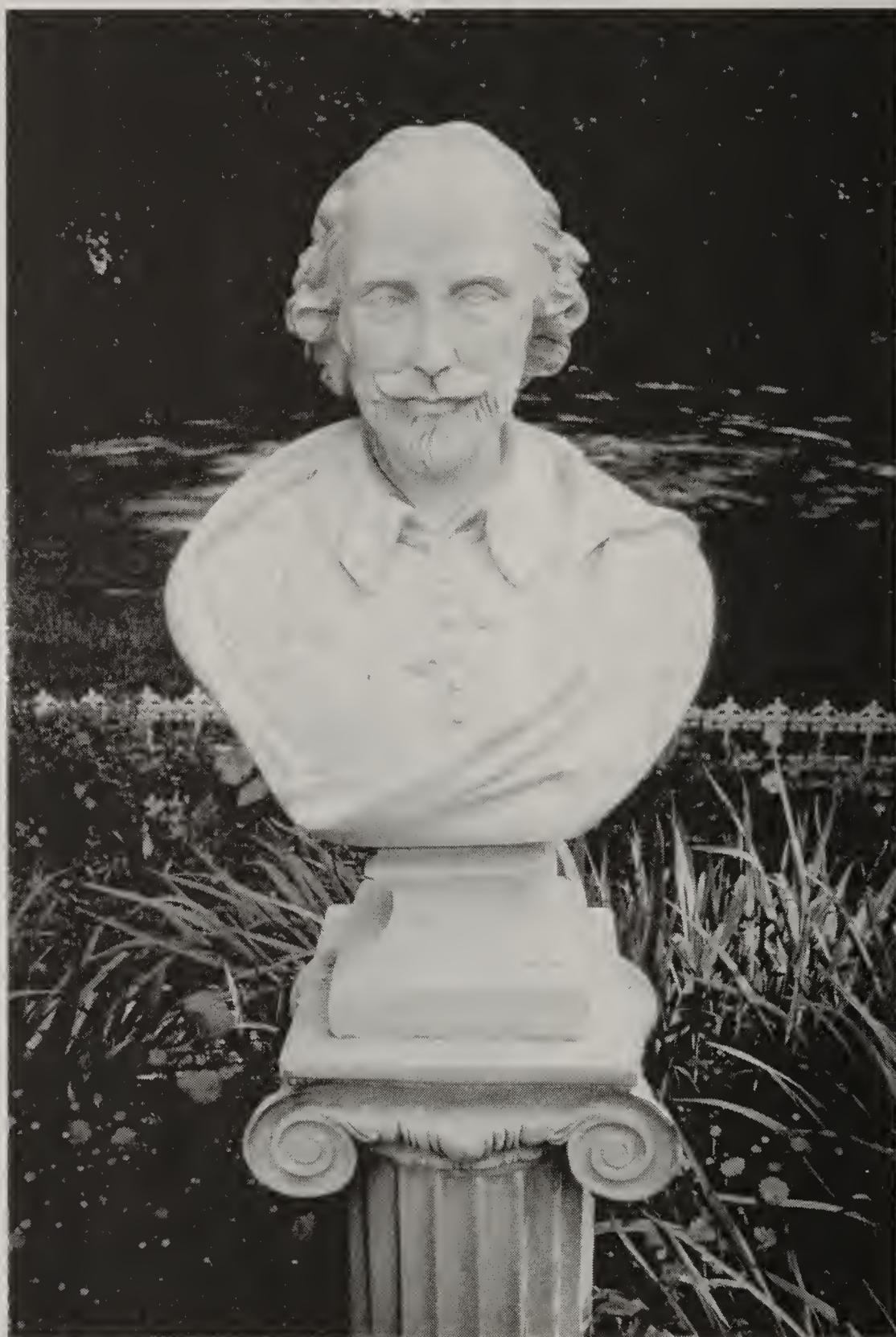
Dancing and spinning, the rain
dumps down acidic drizzle, and the
distant pitter-patter clatter fades
into the distance as our children
round the corner of the cesspit
entrance we fought so hard to
protect.

The wind begins to fade and pass
away into tranquil peace.

Peace of our cherished neighbor-
hoods.

Peace we wished upon our youth.
Peace our broods embrace against
the wind.

The peace our parents longed for
like the plague.



*Shakespeare's Garden
Photo by Brenda Wheeler*

CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

Morals without Instruction: The Downfall of Charlotte Temple

As the narrator of *Charlotte: A Tale of Truth* insists, the morals of young women must be protected and preserved. Susanna Rowson's tale of seduction doubles as a rulebook for how and why morals should be upheld. Young Charlotte Temple falls from grace into the arms of a seducer who abandons her to an early grave, and this tragedy is meant as a deterrent to immorality. However, the novel is more complex than Rowson leads her readers to believe. Charlotte's downfall is the result of her encouraged *naïveté* and deceptive companions rather than divine retribution for moral disobedience.

Montraville is Charlotte's seducer, frequently indicated as responsible for leading her astray only to marry another woman while Charlotte is pregnant with his child. Despite the circumstances, Montraville is hardly the villain he is made out to be. Montraville blames himself for Charlotte's disparaging circumstances, calling himself "the wretched Montraville [...], a mean, ungenerous seducer of unsuspecting innocence" (Rowson 926). Montraville explains that he thought he "loved the lost, abandoned Charlotte" and is so distraught at hurting her that he wishes he "had never seen her" (926). Montraville has every intention of providing for Charlotte and their illegitimate child, and he is saddened by her death to the point of temporary madness.

Steven Epley explores a passage in which Montraville witnesses Charlotte's funeral procession. Montraville is unaware of what has happened and questions a soldier at the scene. Drawing from Ann Douglas's perspective, Epley points out that "the soldier's account 'is Charlotte's version' of her love affair with Montraville," who "considers himself more sinned against than sinning" (200). Not only has Montraville been a victim of trickery, poor counsel, and his own impulsiveness, he is now a victim of the soldier's story. Epley, again borrowing from Douglas, notes that, "the soldier's story 'has become the popular and the true version,' and Montraville 'must subscribe to it'" (200). With the accusations of the soldier as well as Charlotte's father, Montraville places the blame upon himself once again, which is what drives him to mad-

ness. Montraville cannot be held accountable for Charlotte's downfall, but there are other characters that can be.

Although Montraville at one point directs blame onto "that cursed French woman" Mademoiselle La Rue, Belcour plays a larger role in pulling Montraville's strings in addition to Charlotte's (Rowson 926). Belcour is instrumental in helping Montraville gain time alone with Charlotte early in their relationship. Belcour later encourages Montraville to pursue Julia Franklin and forget Charlotte, telling Montraville that "if [Montraville] had not taken advantage of [Charlotte's] easy nature, some other would" (926). Belcour stages a scene for Montraville to make Charlotte look unfaithful while at the same time pretending to befriend Charlotte. When she asks Belcour if Montraville could "be such a villain as to marry another woman," Belcour does not admit to persuading Montraville into doing so. Instead, he replies coolly, "I fear [...] he can be that villain" (932). Belcour is not concerned with Charlotte's welfare or her future. Montraville entrusts him with money to give to Charlotte, but Belcour keeps it for himself. This money would have paid Charlotte's rent, preventing her from being evicted and having to wander the streets on a very cold night. Belcour's conscience makes but one appearance throughout all of his devious plans. While desiring to take Charlotte as his own mistress, "[s]omething like humanity was awakened in Belcour's breast" (931). However, Belcour's "selfish passion [...] soon stifled these finer emotions," and he immediately continues his plotting against her (931-32).

As Charlotte and Montraville represent two innocents, Belcour has a partner in his crimes of the heart, the aforementioned Mademoiselle La Rue. Against Charlotte's moral judgment, the French teacher persuades her to read Montraville's first letter. La Rue, like Belcour, is not thinking of protecting Charlotte's *naïveté* but "eyed the unsuspecting Charlotte, as she perused the letter, with a malignant pleasure" (895). Later, La Rue encourages Charlotte to leave the school, which is in England, and elope with Montraville to America. Charlotte is confused about what to do, and she becomes even more confused when she discovers that La Rue has already decided to elope with Belcour. Later in the novel, when Charlotte is evicted from her house because Belcour does not give her Montraville's money, La Rue unknowingly adds insult to Belcour's injury. With no one else to turn to, Charlotte goes to La Rue, and La

Rue betrays her. The French teacher denies knowing Charlotte and leaves her to die in the company of kindly strangers.

Charlotte may seem to be surrounded by people wishing only to lead her astray and abandon her to the elements, but some characters play positive roles. Charlotte makes a wise decision in accepting the aid of the compassionate Mrs. Beauchamp. Mrs. Beauchamp sees the good in Charlotte and chooses to befriend the despairing young woman. Mrs. Beauchamp provides insightful foreshadowing, fearing that Charlotte "was doomed to linger out a wretched existence in a strange land, and sink brokenhearted into an untimely grave" (918). Both Montraville and Belcour are guilty of destroying letters that Charlotte entrusts them to deliver, and Mrs. Beauchamp reveals this unwelcome truth to Charlotte. She helps Charlotte to regain part of her voice and will-power by making sure that Charlotte's next letter reaches the Temple family. Mrs. Beauchamp recognizes La Rue for who she is, "an artful, and [...] infamous woman" (918). Unfortunately, Mrs. Beauchamp fails to keep Charlotte from her fate. It is while Mrs. Beauchamp is away with her husband that Charlotte is evicted, denied help by La Rue, and housed by one of La Rue's servants. Mrs. Beauchamp lends her powerful aid upon her return, but it is too late to save Charlotte.

Charlotte's only other possible ally is the amiable Madame Du Pont, the head of the school Charlotte is attending in England when she meets Montraville. To Charlotte's disadvantage, however, Madame Du Pont does not have the clear vision Mrs. Beauchamp is privileged with. Charlotte receives a letter from her mother about a birthday party being planned for her, and upon reading it, she begins to cry. Madame Du Pont is surprised by Charlotte's reaction but believes Charlotte when she lies about the reason for her tears rather than realizing that something is wrong. Similarly, Mr. Eldridge, Charlotte's grandfather, is concerned when he arrives at the school to collect Charlotte and she is nowhere to be found. Madame Du Pont, misjudging La Rue's nature, assures him that, "as Mademoiselle is undoubtedly with [Charlotte], she will speedily return in safety" (905). Madame Du Pont's failure to recognize the truth does not keep Charlotte in the simple world of the school but allows the young woman to be carried away by devious characters and a weak will.

Even before Madame Du Pont could have stopped Charlotte's seduction and betrayal, two people could have prevented Charlotte's ill fate: her father Mr. Temple and his wife, Lucy. They believed that Charlotte would be safe from the harms of immorality if she followed in their footsteps, leading an innocent life. They tried to set examples of purity and propriety for Charlotte that were not found in or respected by most of the other characters. Only Madame Du Pont agreed with Lucy and Mr. Temple that Charlotte should "[c]ontinue [...] in the course [she had] ever pursued," meaning that Charlotte should maintain her *naïveté* (903). Therefore, their advice leaves Charlotte innocent of true human nature, subject to devious counsel, and unable to defend her morals. When Charlotte receives her mother's letter about the birthday party, she truly intends to remain at the school and not bring dishonor to her loving parents by eloping with Montraville. Blythe Forcey offers an explanation as to why Charlotte cannot stay true to her proper upbringing, despite her intentions: "the 'miracle' of the letter cannot be sustained in the face of the immediate persuasion of [Mademoiselle] La Rue and Montraville" (235). Forcey adds, "They have the advantage of direct address" (235). Now that Charlotte is out in the world and no longer in her parents' household, she is bombarded by ideas that test her morals. Without her family to protect and guide her, Charlotte cannot fight immorality or stand up to peer pressure. When the Temples send Charlotte, full of moral scruples, off to school, they only mean the best for her. They do not suspect that Charlotte will be cut off from direct ties with them; in one case, La Rue persuades Charlotte not to consult Lucy about Montraville's first letter. Furthermore, the Temples fail to realize that Charlotte needs instruction on how to act on her beliefs rather than fall prey to confusion. They are well aware that cruel people exist in the world but leave Charlotte unprepared to face them.

Forcey also discusses the idea of multilingual characters; "La Rue, Montraville, and Belcour [...] know Charlotte's morally pure language even though they do not adhere to the principles that underlie it" (237). Forcey points out that Charlotte has been "trained to be trusting, obedient, and virtuous" but "cannot speak or understand the language of the new world she has entered" (237). This leaves Charlotte defenseless against the charming Montraville, the selfish Belcour, and the worldly La Rue. Charlotte becomes

easily confused when dealing with them because she cannot understand their motives. Forcey indicates the "worldly *and* honorable" Mrs. Beauchamp has "the answer": "enlightened multilingualism" (240). Mrs. Beauchamp understands the devious language of Montraville, Belcour, and La Rue, but she does not practice it. Instead, she is able to discover the truth and be a strong female force in Charlotte's life.

Charlotte often blames herself for causing grief to her family and trusting Montraville. After reading his first letter, Charlotte is hesitant to meet him the next evening. Susanna Rowson's narrator comments:

Charlotte had taken one step in the ways of imprudence; and when that is once done, there are always innumerable obstacles to prevent the erring person returning to the path of rectitude. Yet these obstacles, however forcible they may appear in general, exist chiefly in imagination. (898)

The narrator is suggesting that Charlotte can never return to morality or propriety once she has obeyed La Rue and read Montraville's letter. The narrator also attempts to negate the destructive actions taken against Charlotte by the other characters. The narrator insinuates that Charlotte's fate is punishment for stepping off the path of purity and innocence. On the other hand, in the story itself, Mrs. Beauchamp tells her husband that if Charlotte had "one kind friend to raise and reassure her," Charlotte may "gladly return to peace and virtue" (918). Mrs. Beauchamp is arguing that Charlotte can—and would like to—be innocent again.

Marion Rust's essay places some blame on Charlotte but not in the accusing way that the narrator does. Rust notes, "Charlotte [...] has an unfortunate habit of staying put in circumstances that cause her discomfort" (8). Charlotte's other problem, according to Rust, is "fainting into the chaise that will take her away and to New York, rather than attending to her very real desire to escape her impending seducer" (8). Indeed, Rust adds, Charlotte's "fate is determined mostly by her habit of passing out at the most inopportune moments" (7). Charlotte's lack of strength, which is a great hindrance to preserving her morality, is a product of the naïveté encouraged by her parents and her dependence on those around her for instruction. Once removed from her parents, she was left to depend upon Montraville, Belcour, and La Rue for

her instruction. Had Charlotte's parents taught her about the world as opposed to keeping her ignorant of it, she would have been able to recognize and, therefore, triumph over the worldly language that confused her.

Although the Temples try to set a moral example for Charlotte, they unfortunately send her out into the world unprepared to stand up against temptations and devious persons. The Temples lose their direct influence on their daughter, and Charlotte becomes subject to the selfish desires of those around her. Had she been given proper instruction on how to protect the morals she wants desperately to preserve, Charlotte would have done so. She could avoid the disasters that lead to her untimely death. Charlotte's encouraged *naïveté* and deceptive companions are the reasons for her downfall; it is not divine retribution for moral disobedience. Susanna Rowson's narrator would lead her readers to believe otherwise, but the evidence may help readers to decide for themselves, a decision Charlotte herself would have trouble making.

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CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

Men

What do you care?
You don't have to
shave your legs
paint your nails
pluck your eyebrows
wear pantyhose or high heels
worry about stretch marks
or menstruation
watch over your shoulder
keep your ears open
pull your coat tighter
around your ribs
when your heart threatens
to burst free
walking alone
for even three feet
on any given night.

The only advice
we've been given
is to make sure we wear
clean underwear
in case we turn up
a corpse.



Sculpture, Sentinel by Rob Lorenson
Photo by Belinda Wheeler

TONYA M. ROGERS

Didja Learn Anything?

When I was thirteen, life was all about fitting in and being cool. The most important aspect of life to me was the here and now. I worried about who liked whom and what the latest name brands were. I remember you often saying, "Didja learn anything?" Well the answer is "Yes!"

I think I was the poster kid for the word tomboy. My closet was full of t-shirts, and jeans. I always wore my hair in a ponytail because I did not know how to style it. I did not dream of growing up and developing into a princess; all I wanted to do was ride my pony to the Wild West. My favorite color was hunter green. My sister, DaNene, on the other hand was a human Barbie doll. She wore the hippest clothes and name brands. Her hair was styled perfectly, and her make-up looked so grown up. I remember DaNene as being petite, and girly. Her favorite color was pink. DaNene and I were total opposites.

I was in the seventh grade, and the teachers were giving my class a little dance. For my friends and me, it was all we talked about. I worried about who would dance with whom and, most importantly, what I would wear. Some of my friends bought new outfits; some of them were planning to wear make-up to the dance. I tried on every combination of clothes I owned trying to put a cool outfit together. The day before the dance, I found this cute little skirt of my sister's. I begged her to loan it to me just for the dance, and of course, she said "No!" I was devastated. I had less than twenty-four hours to find the perfect outfit. I felt my sister was so selfish; my first boy-girl dance and she wouldn't let me borrow her skirt. I had my heart set on wearing that skirt. The skirt's length was mid-calf; it had three little pleats on each hip and a silver zipper that went from top to bottom.

Out of desperation the next day, I stole it! I wadded it up and stuffed it into my book bag. My heart pounded so hard it hurt. My knees shook like never before. The vomit-like feelings of my gut wrenching was unbearable. When I picked up my book bag, all I could smell was the smell of fabric softener. This annoying voice in my head kept nagging at me; I thought I was going to freak out. I kept telling myself if I could wear that skirt, it would all be worth it.

As I was walking toward the door to leave for school, I was thinking I got away with taking the skirt. Then, I suddenly felt this overwhelming awareness of your presence, like a deer starring at headlights and not knowing which way to go. It was all in slow motion. Every muscle in my body trembled when I heard you say, "Marie-zee stop right there!" The few times I heard you call me Marie-zee I knew I was in a lot of trouble. I actual thought I saw smoke coming from your nostrils. The redness of your face looked as though you were going to blow a gasket. As you walked toward me, I felt the ground shaking with your every step. My heart was beating right out of my chest. I thought I was going to puke now more than ever.

Everyone has something that symbolizes that pink skirt. When you told me life is full of lessons, I didn't fully understand what you were trying to teach me. I am thankful you were always there to see me through life's lessons. When I see someone wearing a pink skirt, I smile and think of you and DaNene. I learned there are consequences for my actions. I don't condone stealing, but I'd like to see every thirteen-year-old steal a pink skirt. I'm hoping their mom would step in and put the fear of God in them and maybe this would be a more honest world. The other day, I heard myself ask my daughter, "Didja learn anything?"

Portals of Return

KATIE ANDERSON

SUE ANTOSZEWSKI

CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

JOHN MINOR

CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

CAROL WILSON

ANGELA M. CLARK

KENNETH BERNARD



Photo by Belinda Wheeler

KATIE ANDERSON

Isle of Spring

Spring can never be mirthless.
It waits in silent solitude and allows
Winter to give everyone something to cheer about when
it's over.

And then, greenly shooting warmly sparkles
On the brown and grey of cold
And pulling schmenkles up and out
And rosy muckus puck and pith
Push! Push! Push!

Slowly Slowly open bloomings,
Flowers flutter silky eyelash,
Push away chills and chatters
(And really anything that starts with "ch")
Collars clutterness apart,
Polka-dots and pinka-dots and red-a-dots
And blue-a-dots poke-a-squeezey head out
Oncely to find and face a closer sunshine.

And in the midst of all this
Flossoming and flooming,
The pixies and dotty-mites
Start frolicking in the newly-thawed dirty,
While all manner of fauns and flitty-flytes
And lightness personified begin to climb,
And if you ever have any questions
About flitty-flytes, Just ask me.

I'll be the one sitting naked
In the middle of the garden
With a smile on my face.



*Sculpture, Widow's Watch by David Nelson
Photo by Karen Prescott*

SUE ANTOSZEWSKI

Address Unknown

A post where a rusty mailbox once sat is the only evidence of its existence. The crude, modest farmhouse stands alone – abandoned. A wire fence deformed with age locks the decrepit box away from civilization like a prisoner on death row. Its weathered edifice has a Norman Bates feel to it. The garage stands by the distant property line cast out like a bastard son—the four walls folding in on one another like a house of cards.

Leaving the safe environment of my vehicle, camera in hand, the eroding shack gives me a sense of foreboding. The dwelling, clearly uninhabitable, sends a strange vibe.

Slowly treading through the overgrowth of weeds, purple-veined thorny arms swat at my legs. It would be easier to plot a course through a jungle. Matted grasses that have not felt the blades of a lawnmower in years envelop my every step.

The innards of the house start appearing as I get closer. Wood, broken glass, and plaster are sprinkled about the side yard. Tossed by vandals like futile stones, two decaying chairs lie outside the large picture window. Roots and patchy moss hike up the remaining downspouts like perilous mountaineers. The side door stands ajar. Pushing it open, its white flaky skin comes off on my fingertips. The Master lock once protecting this ancestral estate—pried away.

Stepping over the uneven threshold, I have violated its tranquility. Standing in silence on the unsteady landing, I see the basement opening straight ahead. Past the fractured stairs, the basement door is drowning in an abyss of rotten wood and broken plaster. Holding my camera out into the dark hole, I make sure my hand is through the loop, so I will not drop it. Hoping that when I return to download the pictures to my computer, I do not see devilish eyes grinning at me. Taking a quick breath, I shake the nerve-racking thought from my mind.

Turning to my right, balancing my step like a tightrope walker, I lightly step into what used to be the heart of the home. Surrounded by a wooden skeleton, the stainless steel sink is soiled with growth like an experiment gone mad.

Standing there, I feel like an intruder. I should not be here, but I cannot help going further in and looking around. Scary, yet exciting! There I stand thinking, *Could forgotten spirits be around the corner, lurking outside watching me invade their home?* Anxiously walking through, the only sound, other than the shattered tiles under my feet, is the deafening pounding of my heart.

Crossing the kitchen, careful not to slide in the broken pieces from the ceiling that has fallen like little chunks of snow, I come to the mudroom and the back entry. The cabinets in this room have all been overturned. Shards of colored glass like that of a church window lie at their feet. Some bottles and mason jars remain amazingly unscathed. An old Westinghouse refrigerator from the 1950s is leaning half way out of the window on my left. Ragged, kite-tailed curtains are flowing over it. To my right is a huge monstrosity that looks like the side of a Good Humor truck with all its nooks and crannies to hide frozen treasures. Only, in this icebox, the doors are opened slightly to reveal dirt, leaves, and straw from a bird's nest. Even the birds have long deserted this once steadfast home.

Turning around, I creep back through the kitchen. Strangely, there are no doors on any of the other rooms. I have only seen the side door where my journey began and the basement door, where I had hoped it would not end. All others are mysteriously gone.

Going through the narrow hall, on my right beyond the archway, what used to be a den has completely caved in. To the left is a staircase leading to the second floor. No question in ascension, I will not go. Not only are most of the stairs missing like the teeth of a Halloween jack-o-lantern, I am afraid of what could be up there.

In the living room, there are splinted wooden slats sticking out of the walls like poisonous bungee sticks. The windows are fractured, the plaster pulverized. Roots from a small tree just outside the main window are pushing their way in to take over. Pressed up against the far wall of this small room is a mammoth piano, eerily standing at attention; only a quarter of the chipped keys remain. Why was such a beloved family member left behind? Beyond the living room is a cramped front porch unreachable by any direction. The remnants of metal blinds still rattle in the wind.

As I turn to leave the melancholic piano all alone again, I see graffiti spray painted on the inside wall. Making my way back through this labyrinth to the mudroom, I want to explore the wasteland out back. The concrete steps are full of broken glass. A wobbly handrail fashioned from leftover plumber's pipe, sways in the breeze. I cautiously step to the muddy ground.

Even the trees look deserted. There's hardly a house left to protect, no people to shade from the afternoon sunlight, no kids to feel climbing up their bark and balancing on their branches. Looking as though they have given up, they have shriveled into twisted effigies.

Walking around the far side, you see where the den came crashing down. The beams simply let go. The broken chimney is visible from this side; the small nub that is left would make a stonemason weep.

Weaving through the dense underbrush back to my vehicle, there is a sense of relief. I get to escape this void. I climb back over the wire fence, feeling safer on the roadside. I am back in civilization. Turning the key in the ignition, the corner of my eye catches a glimpse of movement. As I stare at the house, my mind plays tricks on me. I see silhouetted figures dancing in the shadows. Wind laden branches? Mischievous raccoons?

Driving back to my home, not 100 yards away from this bedraggled lineage, I cannot help but wonder, *Could the abandoned spirits be watching me, wondering what the inside of my house looks like?*



Photo by Karen Prescott

CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

The Willow

Vampiro was a vampire, a creature of the night, but his dark crimes weighed heavily on his heart. He moved away from the city with its neon lights and bloodlust, taking up residence in the countryside. Here he became known as Dr. Benjamin Freesoul, a respectable physician, and lived in a two story red brick house covered with vines of ivy. Vampiro soon acquired a housekeeper, a grey-headed old woman named Priscilla, who resided with Vampiro in a bedroom of her own.

A few mornings a week, Vampiro donned his black top hat, picked up his medicine bag, and started off down the road on foot to call on his patients. They always welcomed his advice and quiet company, often inviting him to stay to lunch or, at the very least, take a few biscuits home with him.

But at night, when Priscilla had gone to bed, Vampiro locked himself in his study off the foyer and buried his nose in his books. The countless tomes filled the bookcases around the room and spilled over into mountain ranges across the rug. Vampiro studied encyclopedias and medical volumes, skimmed through ancient literature and obscure texts unearthed from the used book salesman's dusty storeroom. He himself filled books, sketching diagrams onto blank pages and filling others with his cramped, scrawling hand. He muttered to himself far into the night, compulsively, until at last he blew out the lamp and turned in.

One evening, Vampiro was returning home from his house calls to find a young woman of delicate design standing in the middle of his front lawn beneath the impressive willow that grew there. As Vampiro approached, he could see that the woman was weeping into her hands. All attempts to console her proved futile, and Vampiro led her into the house to let a hot cup of tea work its way with her. Soon enough, she stopped her crying and looked at Vampiro almost sheepishly.

"I'm terribly sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to trespass. I was drawn to the willow, but I couldn't bear its misery."

"It is a melancholy tree," Vampiro agreed. "You're young. You have a sentimental heart. What is your name?"

"Clara."

"And your family name?"

"I have no family."

Vampiro frowned, and his heart stirred, for he too existed without the ties of family. He offered Clara the spare room of his house, and she gratefully accepted his hospitality.

In the morning, Vampiro set off on his private errands in town and left Clara in Priscilla's care. The housekeeper had smiled at Clara and even slipped a spidery arm around the young woman's shoulders. However, as soon as Vampiro disappeared out the door, Priscilla tightened her grasp on Clara and fairly sneered at her. Clara became frightened and tried to slip away.

"The doctor has put you under my charge, under my watchful eye," Priscilla told her. She let her lazy eye wander for a moment to further Clara's terror. "Can you spin thread?"

Clara shook her head.

"Today you will learn." Priscilla released Clara with a small push and pointed a knotted finger to the wooden spinning wheel in a corner of the room. "Just do your best. And don't come to me complaining if you prick your finger."

When Vampiro arrived home in the late afternoon with a few old books under his arm, Clara was still seated at the spinning wheel. Her hands were smeared with blood, and she had not managed one inch of thread. Vampiro knew who was to blame, and displeasure set his jaw firmly. He stared at the blood on Clara's skin, drying dark in the creases of her palms, before forcing himself from the room.

The next time Vampiro took up his top hat and medicine bag, Clara was right behind him in a clean white smock. She followed him on his rounds, too shy to walk beside him. They stopped at a quaint beige cottage, where Mrs. Pinkleweather welcomed them inside.

Being prone to drama, Mrs. Pinkleweather gasped at the sight of Clara and exclaimed, "Who is this precious child?"

"My assistant, Clara," Vampiro replied. "How is your son this morning?"

Mrs. Pinkleweather, quite fond of Vampiro, chuckled warmly. "You're the best judge of ill and health, Dr. Freesoul."

Clara followed them into the bedroom where Mrs. Pinkleweather's son lie resting. Clara was greatly intimidated by Mrs. Pinkleweather and did not wish to speak to her. She was immensely relieved once they were on the road again, leaving Mrs. Pinkleweather to wave to them from the porch.

Clara was hardly spared Mrs. Pinkleweather's presence. The woman appeared on Vampiro's doorstep a few days later. Clara was so shocked to find Mrs. Pinkleweather at the door, she was unable to greet her. Priscilla entered the foyer and was equally perturbed to see Mrs. Pinkleweather stepping into the house.

"Are you working so late tonight, my dear?" Mrs. Pinkleweather asked Clara.

"What is your business?" Priscilla cut in.

"I found something at my house—a kind of instrument—and I thought it might belong to Dr. Freesoul," Mrs. Pinkleweather explained.

Priscilla held out her hand. "Let's have it then."

Mrs. Pinkleweather drew back and clutched her handbag closer. "I'd like to deliver it directly to the good Doctor, if you don't mind."

"He is in the study. He does not wish to be disturbed."

Before Priscilla finished speaking, Mrs. Pinkleweather's eyes fell on the only closed door in the foyer. She threw the door open at once and burst into the room—what little room was left by Vampiro's numerous tomes.

Vampiro stood up from the desk and whirled around to see who had disturbed his peace. Mrs. Pinkleweather was admiring the room nonchalantly while Priscilla loomed over her shoulder.

"Pardon the intrusion, dear Doctor," Mrs. Pinkleweather said, smiling.

"You do have the most impressive collection of books."

Vampiro nodded only once, his patience already worn thin. "What did you need to see me about?"

"An instrument, Doctor," Priscilla answered curtly. She laid her claw-like hand on Mrs. Pinkleweather's fleshy shoulder, but the woman stepped further into the room.

"Oh, never mind that," Mrs. Pinkleweather laughed, making a show of digging through her handbag. "Silly me! I must've forgotten it at home. But Dr. Freesoul, I do need to speak to you about a little matter. I was wondering if

you might consider renting out your spare room to my nephew, Lucas John. He's such a bright boy, and I'm sure you'd find him a great help—"

"The room is not available," Priscilla interrupted, again taking hold of Mrs. Pinkleweather's shoulder.

The woman's face flashed an expression of annoyance. "I did not address you."

"It is true, Mrs. Pinkleweather," Vampiro replied. "I have given the spare room to young Clara."

"Your assistant?" Mrs. Pinkleweather declared, looking pale. "That sweet child? It's not proper. Why, it's absolutely scandalous for her to reside here with you."

"I have resided here for some time without rumors," Priscilla argued.

"You are too old for scandal. The girl's reputation will soon be ruined!"

"She is a case of charity," Priscilla replied. "She does not 'reside' anywhere."

Vampiro said nothing, and Priscilla led Mrs. Pinkleweather out of the study. Clara stood motionless at the bottom of the stairs and watched Priscilla usher Mrs. Pinkleweather out the front door.

Mrs. Pinkleweather turned and pointed at Clara, shouting, "Devilish child! Sinner! God deal fairly with you!"

Priscilla closed the door firmly and latched it. Vampiro appeared in the doorway to his study.

"I'm sorry, Doctor," Clara said quietly. "I let her in."

"It's all right, Clara. Would you join me for a cup of tea?" Vampiro offered. Clara nodded, and Vampiro nodded to Priscilla to bring them some tea.

Priscilla went off to the kitchen, and Clara crept forward to Vampiro's study. She lingered just inside the door to avoid disturbing the mounds of books on the floor. Vampiro stood across the study at his desk, deep in thought. Only when Priscilla had brought the silver tea tray to him did Vampiro speak, pouring the tea into two cups.

"I apologize for Mrs. Pinkleweather's harsh words," he said. "But she's right. I'm afraid that in enjoying your gentle company, I neglected to consider your welfare."

"On the contrary, Doctor," Clara replied, "it was consideration that made you take me in."

"You misjudge my nature." Vampiro crossed the room and handed Clara a cup of tea, keeping the other for himself. He took a leather-bound volume from the shelf and opened it for Clara, showing her a diagram of the male body with his cramped script close around it. "I am not who you think, and you were not meant to know such terrible truths. May God forgive me for showing you this much. It is only to prove my point."

"What is this book?" Clara whispered.

Vampiro snapped it closed and promptly returned it to the shelf. "It is my work, my true work, financed by my occupation as physician." He turned away and walked back to the desk. "You must leave here tomorrow."

"I prefer to stay," Clara said.

Vampiro faced her gravely. "There is only one way I could let you remain here, but I do not dare bind you to me. I'm sending you away on the first train. You must forget this house, the people who dwell here, and the time you've spent with us."

"Doctor, I know you to be honorable and kind—"

"No, Clara. Surely I have been plotting the most horrific crimes against your soul. You will be better off far from this place. Now go to sleep. I will take you to the station in the morning."

Clara set her cup of tea on the bookshelf and walked out of the study. Vampiro remained at his desk late into the night, pouring over his tomes and at last retiring to bed.

In the morning, Vampiro did not find Clara in her room. He descended the staircase and was drawn to the open door of his study. Here Clara sat on his desk with a thick volume open in her hand. She raised her eyes to meet Vampiro's. His body stiffened.

"What have you done?" Vampiro demanded.

A sly grin seized Clara's lips. "I am one of you, Vampiro. I've been reading your work. It's fascinating."

Vampiro's heart tore at the loss of the tenderhearted Clara he had known. "Whom did you choose as your victim?" he asked.

Clara licked her lips and slid to her feet. She left the book on the desk and approached Vampiro with slow, sensual steps. "The charming Mrs. Pinkleweather."

Vampiro made no reply.

Clara slipped her arms up around Vampiro's pale neck, her eyes shining triumphantly. "You cannot send me away now. There is no reputation, no girl to protect. The world is ours, Vampiro."

"Clara, it was your innocence and your kindness that I loved. I had hoped to be more like you. The world is not mine, and I have tried my best to forget that it exists."

"How can such a wise soul be such a fool?" Clara eyed Vampiro's lips and stretched upward as if to kiss him.

Vampiro pulled away vehemently. "I am no fool. Do you think my work was merely to explore my gifts and limitations?" Vampiro strode across the study to his desk and opened the top right drawer. He drew out a small vial and held it up for Clara to see. "This is what I've been working for, the greatest power I can ever know."

Clara stepped forward and took the vial from him. "A secret potion?"

Vampiro nodded.

Clara pried out the stopper and emptied the vial's liquid into her mouth. "What power fills me now?" she asked coyly.

"Your own destruction. The purpose of my work was to discover a serum that would take my life and end my immortal suffering. The formula was too sacred to record, dear Clara, and the ingredients too rare for me to possibly be able to manufacture another vial. I can only pray—"

Vampiro broke off his explanation abruptly, as Clara nearly lost her balance and gripped his arm for support. Her face was white with fear.

"Forgive me," Vampiro pleaded. "I shouldn't have let you drink it."

"Forgive me, Doctor," Clara replied in a raspy voice. "I shouldn't have loved you."

"Clara—"

Her eyes closed with her final exhale, and she fell against his chest. Vampiro held Clara's lifeless body to him. The most he could do was to sigh

and mutter, "Better you rest than I; better you rest than I."

At the end of the week, citizens of the countryside gathered in the cemetery on the edge of town to bury Mrs. Pinkleweather and the young Clara. Vampiro was often seen visiting Clara's grave at the end of his long days. He gave heart-felt speeches to the squirrels and black crows about the pitfalls of love and immortality.

One unremarkable morning, Vampiro donned his top hat and left his house with medicine bag in hand. He could not mistake the sound of a young woman weeping. She stood beneath the willow with her tiny hands covering her face. Vampiro looked straight ahead at the iron gate, adjusted his top hat, and let himself out of the yard.



*Sculpture, Odysseus by John Adduci
Photo by Karen Prescott*

JOHN MINOR

The Dance

Over the mountains that touch the sky,
Determined warriors drawing neigh,
From keep and shire, with sword and lance,
To meet the Tiger and share the dance.

Barons with their armor bright,
Rallied troops to join the fight.
Over bridge and field they did advance,
To meet the Tiger and share the dance.

From hill and vale, with bow and blade,
To meet upon the emerald glade.
There they came to take their stance,
To meet the Tiger and share the dance.

Pike and mace, shield and helm,
Knight and Squire throughout the realm,
With retainers of Lord and Son
All go to have a chance,
To meet the Tiger and share the dance.

Across the emerald valley floor,
The challenge of the Tiger, a mighty roar.
The air did ring and the valley shake,
From the path of the Dragon's wake.

The dance is done, tis no more,
Red now stains the emerald floor.
With banners high the Dragon does prance,
She met the Tiger, and shared the dance.

Dragon and Tiger met that day,
At an emerald vale named Coopers Lake.
The Tiger was shown the Dragon's way,
By the rhythm and beat that warriors make.

A new Tiger is growing it does seem,
Tis our noble warrior's dream.
Again the Dragon to have her chance,
To meet the Tiger and share the dance.

CASSANDRA ZURAWSKI

Smoke

When Roxxi first dragged me along to Java Joe's, I'd coughed on some jerk's cigarette smoke as we waited for the coffee shop to open. I still don't understand why some people have to smoke while they're standing so close to everybody. I ran into him again with Carrie and actually stopped by his table long enough to ask him what the letters ICC meant on his tall white Styrofoam cup. He was drawing an exquisite dragon in a spiral notebook at the time. He looked up at me for a long moment with his spooky green eyes—the color always caught me off guard—and told me, "Irish cream cappuccino."

Today I'm in the coffee shop by myself, minding my own business with my back to the windows furthest from the door. The smoking jerk is here, sitting by himself, and our eyes meet. He gets up, and for a terrifying second, I think he's going to come over. Instead, he joins the short line to buy his token cappuccino.

Then he comes over.

"You don't care if I sit here, do you?" he asks as he pulls out the chair across from me. He slides his notebook onto the table and sets his Styrofoam cup next to it. He sits down.

The only thing that seems real is one single thought as it flashes through my mind: I have nothing to say to him. He must have the same problem because he opens his notebook, takes a pencil from one of his pockets, and starts sketching. Barely glancing up at me every few seconds, I watch the outline of my face take shape on the paper.

"That's incredible," I mutter. At twenty-five, I'm still drawing stick figures.

"I didn't sit here to draw you," the smoking jerk informs me. His voice is neither cold nor warm. His eyes are the same way; indifferent, drawing my curiosity as deftly as his hand draws my face. "Drawing is what I do," he continues as if he's been listening to me think.

"You should draw this place a new sign," I tell him, trying to cut the tension. Java Joe's logo is a cup of coffee with steam rising out of it to loosely form a face.

"I did draw the sign," the smoking jerk answers.

I can't believe how often I jam my foot in my mouth. "I'm sorry."

"It's all right," he replies absentmindedly. He starts adding my hair to the sketch in light, deliberate strokes. "I know the sign sucks. I did it over two years ago."

"Do you draw a lot of people?" I ask quietly. I don't want to make him mess up.

"I'm always drawing something." The smoking jerk takes a short break, laying his pencil down and taking a sip of his cappuccino. He fixes those green eyes on me. "You keep coming back here. Why?"

I get the impression he won't start drawing again until I've answered his question. "One of my roommates dragged me here, then I dragged my other roommate in," I tell him. "Today I'm just trying to avoid them."

The smoking jerk doesn't answer. He picks up the pencil again and adds texture to the lips on the page in front of him. "I only noticed that you keep coming in because you stand out."

I almost smile. I'm convinced the only reason anyone ever remembers me is because my hair is dyed a bold, Crayola red—Corvette convertible red with black highlights. Everyone in this room is neat, tidy, and proper except the smoking jerk and me. He's wearing baggy jeans and a worn red hoodie. "Is my hair really that bad?" I ask.

"It's not your hair," he says. "It's your whole attitude, your aura. Your vibe. You don't fit in, and you don't care. But you keep coming back."

I watch him draw for a moment. "I don't know your name."

"I don't know yours," he replies.

There's no flirtation in his voice. It's closer to stubbornness, almost like he's challenging me to wrestle his name out of him. I'm a little perturbed he doesn't care about my name. It's Azura, and I'm dying to tell him one of my clever, witty lies about how I got it. Mother got it off a Ouija board or a particularly boring game of Boggle... Instead, the smoking jerk sketches in a little shadow around the nose and then a little on the cheeks. Only the eyes are missing. It's creepy.

He looks at me for a long time, unwavering, committing my face to his memory. It makes me uncomfortable. I ask him, "Do you always drink the same thing?"

"Yes," he answers, beginning to draw the eyes. "Do you always ask this many questions?"

"I talk too much."

"Yes, you do." He says it as a matter of fact, not as a judgment against my character. Everything he says is without interest or concern. "It means you're using your brain. Congratulations."

I suddenly wonder what could have happened to him to turn him into such a sarcastic observer of people. He can't be much older than me if he's older at all. I don't dare ask him; there's no point. He'd never tell. He's even less interested in telling a sob story than I am in hearing it.

The smoking jerk finishes the outlines of the eyes, but they still have no pupils. He takes another cappuccino break, studying my face as he does so. There's something in those green eyes that says he's studying me to satisfy some secret question—maybe a strange longing—and not just studying me for the picture.

"Don't you ever buy anything here?" he asks. "You'll piss off the management."

"My body doesn't like caffeine. I try to avoid things that are bad for me."

His gaze hardens slightly as he says, "Like smoking?"

I nod. That's twice I've insulted him. I hope he's not counting. As soon as he goes back to the drawing, I glance at my watch.

He notices anyway. "Nervous? Anxious to go?" he drones.

"I just want to know what time it is," I say defensively.

"I'm almost done."

So he is. The eyes are coming along under the precise, short motions of the pencil. Every mark he makes is perfect.

"Have you drawn a lot of the people who come here?" I ask.

"No. I'm not interested in those blue-collar bastards. The working class. Prostitutes of the system."

I'm shocked by his harsh view of society. "What makes you say that?"

The smoking jerk looks up at me. "You work, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Don't you ever get the impression that you're a slave to the system? To capitalism? Would you work if you didn't have to?"

"Nobody would."

"Exactly," he whispers and goes back to the drawing.

It's only now that I notice how empty the room has become. Because there's no one in line, the girl from behind the counter has journeyed out into the room to wipe the tables off. She's coming closer and closer, working quickly. Soon she's standing over the smoking jerk, watching him add a few more lines here and there.

"That's pretty good," she praises him. She looks at the drawing, then at me, then back at the picture.

"Is it good for the resemblance, or did I improve on her?" the smoking jerk asks. "Is it only good in and of itself?"

"It's a perfect resemblance," the girl assures him.

"I can't improve on her," the smoking jerk decides, studying my face again.

I'm so flattered I can't speak. The girl doesn't say anything, either. She gives me a look that suggests he has the hots for me. Obviously she hasn't been listening to the rest of our conversation.

The girl walks away and starts fiddling around behind the counter. I watch the smoking jerk's face as he looks over the drawing. He sighs and scribbles his name in the corner. As an afterthought, he adds the date. He carefully tears the page out of his notebook and hands it to me.

"It is very good," I tell him.

When I try to hand the picture back, he simply closes his notebook and drinks more of his cappuccino.

"Don't you want it?" I ask about the drawing.

"You keep it."

"Don't you want it for a portfolio or something?"

"I said, you keep it."

I look at the smoking jerk, sitting across from me in his old red hoodie with his Irish cream cappuccino. What is it about him that makes me want to kiss him and slap his face at the same time?

"What did you mean when you said you can't improve on me?" I ask. The

feeling of being flattered gives way to the realization that I don't have a clue what he meant.

He gazes steadily back at me, like he's the only person on earth who doesn't get antsy from looking people in the eye for too long. "There's this little story about an old woman at the county fair. There was this man there drawing portraits, and he asked the old woman if she wanted to be drawn. She said she didn't want to pay to see the wrinkles on her own face. The man told her he didn't see any wrinkles. The old woman immediately sat down and had her portrait drawn." The smoking jerk pauses, still studying my face. "Some good portraits are representations; some are improvements. I don't want to draw well. I want to draw what's there, ugly or otherwise."

I don't know if he answered my question or changed the subject. "Are you saying you can't improve me or that you won't?" I ask.

"You're trying to trick me into telling you that you're beautiful. That's not going to happen." His green eyes wander over my face and my hair. Begrudgingly, he says, "Yes, you're beautiful."

I want to thank him, but it doesn't seem appropriate.

The smoking jerk stands up and holds out his hand. I stand up, too, and shake his hand. His long fingers pull away and pick up the cappuccino. I remember watching those fingers fish a cigarette from its pack, watching him light up outside the coffee shop the week before. "I guess I'll see you around, beautiful," he says, his voice still as drained of flirtation as ever.

"Yeah. See ya."

He shoves his pencil in the pocket of his baggy jeans and picks up the notebook. With the smooth gait of a movie star, he walks to the door, pushes it open with his back, and disappears from view.

I'm left standing at the table, and when I look down, my own face is staring back at me in its graphite representation. I pick up the drawing, being extra careful not to crease it, and sling my purse over my shoulder. As I head to the door, the girl behind the counter says, "I think he likes you."

"I don't think he likes anybody," I reply honestly.

"I've only seen him talk to a few other people in the two or three years he's been coming here. I've definitely never seen him draw anyone."

I shrug. So I'm an exception. So what? There's an exception to every rule,

and I'm usually that exception. I'm used to it, and I like it. I shove the door open and walk out into the chilly morning. The smoking jerk is standing on the sidewalk on the other side of the small parking lot. He's smoking a cigarette.

I walk to my car and climb in. I pull out of my space and drive up to the street, waiting to pull into traffic. The smoking jerk is right out my passenger window. He motions with his cigarette, and I roll the window down with the push of a button.

"Cancer stick, beautiful?" he offers, grinning for the first time. His teeth are stained yellow beneath the green of his eyes.

"No thanks," I tell him.

The smoking jerk steps back, his smile already faded, and I drive away.

CAROL WILSON

My Mother's Lover

My father, I must report, is a man who does not give up easily. Still, he once told me that if my mother ever came home with another lover, he would lovingly and willingly let her go. He said that if a force was so great that it took her away from their life together, then it would be senseless to try to stop it. He believes that some things are better to accept than to battle.

My mother has a new lover. Their initial meeting and the premise of their attraction was beyond the notice of the family. Their courtship was long and elusive: stolen moments during social gatherings, far away gazes, lost moments of poignant reflection, and reckless, consuming oblivion. The point at which their interaction changed from flirtatious wanderings to intertwined commitment has been forever lost to them.

He treats her well. He takes her dancing and plays endless games with her. He keeps her up until early morning hours, whispering sweet nothings into her innocent and childlike ear. He occupies her time so that she no longer notices the incongruities in life, the inconsistencies, the challenges, and the struggles that used to torture her in earlier years. The sorrows and losses she was once consumed with have given way to the innocence of forgotten abandonment.

My mother has a new lover. His name is Alzheimer. He never leaves her side. He tends to her as a child dotes on a favorite doll. He toys with her and consumes her every moment. He fills her mind with ideas and memories that no longer include her family. Her thoughts are no longer her own. His influence is undeniable, his focus fixed and firm, his mark indelible. She responds to his influence as a young girl would, enamored from her own *naïveté*.

We could not have guessed how strong and far reaching their connection would eventually become. We found ourselves in a state of denial, not of her lover's existence, but of the fragility of life. We have lost our mother; and with her, we have lost a part of ourselves, a part that was, until now, unknown even to us. We are left with our memories, insecure and elusive as they may be. The process cannot be stopped, nor can it be helped, neither for her, nor for us.

There is no place for us in her world. Our memories are not her memories. Our mother is gone, but she remains with us. The realization of this leads us to ponder and fear those we may turn our backs on and what we might unwillingly abandon. We fear it could happen to us.

We find ourselves lost in questions of life's unpredictability, faced, through no choice of our own, with questions that offer no answers. My mother's new lover has made his mark, leaving us with the knowledge that life, though delicate and elusive, is precious. The incongruities are inescapable, the sorrows and losses inevitable. We search to find harmony between our knowledge of today and the unknown of tomorrow. We attempt to endure the bond that holds the lovers in a grip that will endure until death comes to separate them. Their union will be carried with us like images from an old photo that we longingly search in order to find forgotten memories, memories that, for now, we find comfort in.

ANGELA M. CLARK

An Unfolding of Sylvia Plath's "Tulips"

In Sylvia Plath's poem, "Tulips," a popular flower that is a welcome gift to most people, do not please the poet when she receives a dozen of these blooms (29). This poem was written when Plath spent a week in the hospital to have appendectomy surgery (Hughes 291). She wrestled throughout much of her adult life with the demons of depression and suicide. She also struggled with internal conflicts between her personal ambitions and her roles as a woman, wife, and mother (Ramazani, Ellman and O'Clair 593). She uses the red tulips she receives while in the hospital to represent the elements of her life that are painful and the ties that always seem to pull her back from the brink of death. Plath plays with the word "tulips" throughout this work. When the syllables are separated as if to form two words, they sound like "two lips." These flowers become the metaphoric image of a mouth. They are bright red like lips and many times she hears them breathing, talking, and even imagines that she sees their tongues (36 - 41). Sometimes the tulips also have eyes and seem to watch her (43, 47). Plath also plays with the symbolic meanings of color – contrasting the pure white world of near-death she finds in the hospital with her insistent, nagging life that is represented by the red of the tulips. She wants to sink into the comforting white of oblivious release from her struggles, but the pulsing, red blood of life keeps tugging her back. Plath uses subtle and overt forms of symbolism and metaphor throughout this poem to tell the story of her internal battle.

The tulips are introduced by Plath immediately in the first line of this work. They "are too excitable," she says. These bright flowers are too stimulating and irritating. Plath implies that she is in a state of hibernation with the words "it is winter here," and these unwanted flowers are disturbing her sleep (1). The theme of hibernation carries through into the second line where everything is "quiet" and "snowed-in." The color white is significant. It is clean and pure, and it is a color often associated with heaven and, by further association, with death. Plath describes the meditative state she has adopted in the next few lines. She is releasing her emotions and thoughts: emptying herself until she is

"nobody" (5). The mention of the "the light" in line four is another reference to heaven and is associated with Jesus (John 8.12). Her words, "I have nothing to do with explosions," tie directly back to the "excitable" tulips (1, 5). Large groups of flowers are often described as explosions of color. Plath is relinquishing all control to others and letting go of all her ties. The nurses take her name and her "day-clothes," and the "anesthetist" takes her "history" while the "surgeons" are given her "body" (6 – 7). She feels released from all her earthly bonds.

Plath becomes a blank medium through which all emotions, sights, and other sensory stimuli simply pass through without leaving an impression and without attaching themselves to her. The nurses prop her "head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff" so that the rest of her body is covered and not visible (8). She compares the image of her disembodied head to that of an eye "between two white lids" that is always open and is always absorbing the events taking place around it (9 – 10). Plath calls it a "Stupid pupil" (10). The word "pupil" has two meanings. It can mean the black opening "in the center of the iris of the eye," which directly corresponds to the eye image from the beginning of this second stanza, or it can also mean a student ("Pupil"). She is admonishing both the eye and the intellect even though they have no choice but to "take everything in" since that is their nature.

Plath is trying to detach herself from all activity going on around her. The nurses passing through her room performing their daily chores and tasks do not disturb her (11). She compares them to gulls on the shore – they are identical, nameless, and numberless (12 – 14). They are an innocuous part of the scenery. Presumably the nurses are also wearing white and walk in noiseless shoes, so they blend into the winter landscape of her hospital room.

In the third stanza Plath describes her body as a "pebble" lying beneath running water (15). The touch of the nurse's hands on her skin and smoothing her covers is like the feeling of water as it passes over the surface of a small stone (15 – 16). They are tending to her outside surface, but nothing can touch her internal surfaces. Plath is thankful for the "numbness" and the "sleep" the nurses bring with "their bright needles" (17). She welcomes this emptiness and says in line eighteen that she is "sick of baggage." She no longer wants to be burdened by anything: her possessions in the "overnight case" that drug her

with her need of them, or her family that catches onto her skin and holds her back (19 – 21). She compares the smiles of her "husband and child" to "smiling hooks" that snag at her skin and threaten to drag her back to life (20 – 21).

In line twenty-two Plath compares herself to a "thirty-year-old cargo boat." She has "let things slip." As a nautical term the word "slip" means to "free an anchored ship" ("Slip"). However, she is hanging on to that anchor in the form of her "name and address" that is probably a hospital identity bracelet (23). Like a boat, she is "swabbed" clean. In this case, she is also cleansed of all her "loving associations" (24). As she is wheeled out of her room and as the anesthesia takes over, she watches her possessions leave her sight as though she were sinking under water (25 – 27). Line twenty-seven is clearly a baptismal image of being immersed in water. After the surgery, as after a baptism, Plath feels that she is cleansed and has "never been so pure" (28). The tulips have not been mentioned since the first stanza. Most of these first five stanzas have described Plath's journey into and through her white world of peaceful non-being. The transition begins in the next stanza by returning to the jarring image of the tulips in a sterile hospital room.

Plath does not want these flowers (29) for they are reminders of life and of the living. She doesn't want to be pulled back from her comforting and welcoming world of near-death. Again she describes her pose of meditation "with hands turned up" and her mind as "utterly empty" (30). This oblivious state is so free and peaceful to her that she is unwilling to give it up, and there is a sense of desperation here as she tries to cling to this empty state of mind (31 – 33). She imagines that this condition of utter surrender is like the hook that the "dead close on" just like fish taking bait and "Shutting their mouths on it" (34 – 35). The bait is a "Communion tablet" or the body of Christ (35). This is her holy moment or her communion with God.

With line thirty-six, Plath begins her battle of the red versus the white. She says that the "tulips are too red." Red is a powerful and passionate color in contrast to the coolness and serenity associated with white. Red is also the color of blood, and the drawing of blood is associated with pain. Plath says that these red tulips "hurt" her (36). They are causing her pain, but it's not so much a physical pain as it is a mental agony. The imagined red lips of the tulip

surround a mouth that is biting into her psyche and attacking the shroud it has wrapped itself in. Plath can hear the tulips breathing even though their color and shape are obscured by the "white swaddling" of their "gift paper" (37–38). She compares them to "an awful baby," which is a reference to a role she struggles with. There is a sense of delirium in this stanza that continues throughout the rest of the poem. The red of the tulips "corresponds" with her wound (39). The pain of her recent surgery is intensified by her psychological anguish. These red tulips seem harmless. To others they appear to be the joyful flowers of spring, but Plath laments that "They are subtle" and "they weigh me down" (40). She is upset by these flowers, and the term "a tongue-lashing" comes to mind when she speaks of their sudden tongues as though she is being scolded by the tulips (41). They are an assault upon her ears and her eyes as well as her mind. She compares them to a "dozen red lead sinkers round my neck," dragging her under and drowning her (42). She is persistent in trying to float to heaven, and they are insistent in bringing her back down to earth.

Plath's secure refuge is being torn apart. The sense of paranoia is strong within the last three stanzas. She is being watched now by the sun and the tulips, and she is caught between the flowers and the window that permits the sunshine through (43 – 47). Plath once again uses the image of the eye just as she did in the second stanza. It is easy to imagine the eyelids opening and closing when the "light slowly opens and slowly thins" (45). She appears in this light as a "cut-paper shadow" like a head and shoulders portrait that has "no face." She reveals her urge for obliteration when she says that she wants "to efface" herself (46, 48). Plath feels that these reminders of life, the "vivid tulips," are eating her "oxygen" (49). The air is being sucked out of this room that has been her little sanctuary, and she feels as though she is being suffocated by these tulips just as she feels she is being suffocated by the weight of her life.

Before the arrival of the flowers, all seems to be fine, and the atmosphere is "calm enough" (50). Plath again uses the meditation image in line fifty-one when she describes the air "coming and going, breath by breath, without any fuss." She is trying to cling to her peaceful sanctuary and the numbing oblivion

of the hospital room, but life keeps tugging at her to get her attention. The symbolic mouths of the tulips are bombarding her with their "loud noise" (52). They are creating a disturbance in her once well-ordered world, and they cause her to "concentrate" her "attention" on them instead of letting her thoughts roam freely without commitment (53 – 56). Her meditative concentration is broken, and her pure white world is once again sullied by the redness and rawness of life.

This battle between the red and the white ends with the red victorious this time. The vibrant red tulips succeed in chasing away the intoxicating lure of the cold white world of near-death. The warmth of the tulips seems to be spreading throughout Plath's hospital room and creeping up the walls as though melting the ice of winter (57). The gentle heat of spring sunshine and the forced cheeriness of the flowers are banishing the winter cold from her room and from her heart. She is resentful of these harbingers of spring. She calls them "dangerous animals" and feels that they "should be behind bars" (58). The blooms of the tulips have totally opened and the petals are falling outward and "opening like the mouth of some great African cat" (59). They seem prepared to swallow her whole. Plath is no longer empty and receptive – she has been drug painfully back to the awareness of life. In line sixty, she becomes aware again of her heart with its valves opening and closing to pump the red blood throughout her body. The bowl of red tulips insinuates itself into her body as a "bowl of red blooms" that are opening and closing "out of sheer love of" her (50 – 51). Plath is crying, and the tears run down her face and into her mouth. She is not crying out of sadness but out of frustrated anger. She says the "water" she tastes "is warm and salt, like the sea" (62). Life may have won the battle this time, but it has not won the war. A healthy body and a healthy mind seem to be as far from her reach as some distant country (63).

Sylvia Plath fills "Tulips" with layers of symbolism and meaning, and she plays with sharp contrasts in order to emphasize the depth of her struggles. She welcomes this interlude in the hospital as a chance to temporarily let go of her earthly bonds and to purge herself of all her concerns. Her burdens are blocked temporarily at the hospital door. Plath is seduced by the near-death environment she finds herself in. Inevitably, however, when she somewhat

reluctantly chooses life, all the old ties and conflicts will return to pull her apart. This poem describes the tension of the high wire act Plath performs as she tries to balance her life and her roles and at the same time fight the inner demons that threaten to destroy her.

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KENNETH BERNARD

The Room behind the Glass Wall

The smell of disinfectant and Pine-sol stings my nostrils as I walk aimlessly down unfamiliar corridors. My mind is racing off on its own, separated from the rest of my body, leaving it to function all on its own. With no destination, I just walk. I have become a ship, crippled at sea, letting the waves carry me where they may.

The event that is about to unfold will change my life forever, turning me into someone new. I am in a self-composed cocoon, awaiting the results of what will emerge, all the while wondering if I will survive this transformation. Will I transpire into a new creature, so beautiful, with a new role in life? All of these questions swim around in my head, like sharks stalking their prey.

When I finally become aware of my surroundings, the first thing I notice is this weird sensation of being in the presence of life and death at the same time. I see these people with the ability to save lives, to the joy and relief of friends and family, yet those very same people unwillingly let a life slip away. This tragedy is marked by faint cries heard off in the distance, like a pack of wolves howling at a full moon or at the passing of one of their own.

I am so terrified! Not for myself, but for my best friend, Gin. To see her lying in bed, with several tiny snake-like objects protruding from her body, begs me to wonder if they are helping or hurting. The fear I have is not my own, for it belongs to Gin. She cannot feel anything from her waist down. The machines scattered all around her body indicate when and how often her heart beats. As she lay in a state of dazed oblivion, I can do nothing but watch, wait, and worry, wondering if all parties involved will make it out of this unharmed. It is only a matter of time now. With every thump in my chest, with every beep of the surrounding machines, my mind pictures, in slow motion, a grain of sand falling to the top of the mound to join the other seconds that have slowly passed.

Summoned from my own self-induced oblivion, I see an angel. He is cloaked in all white and has the brilliance of knowledge, hope, and mercy radiating off of him as powerful as the rays of the sun itself. With him, he

carries the instruments of life, and suddenly, the slow and rhythmic thumps in my chest become as fast as an array of automatic gunfire, trembling throughout my entire body like thunder and surely audible to those around me.

I can see myself, outside of myself, at Gin's bedside holding her hand. I am reassuring her that all will be well, and there is nothing to fear. At this point, nothing is real. I am nothing more than a character in my own dream. Everything I have learned in my life up until now seems useless in this situation that I am in right now. *Why am I here?* I wonder. *All I can do right now is watch the woman I love more than the air I breathe, suffer.* With that in mind, my breath becomes short, and stars fill my sight. I am caught in a windstorm, twirling me around and around. My thoughts begin to fade, and all of a sudden, all is dark and forgotten.

Bone shattering screams return me to a state of consciousness. I am now trapped behind a glass wall, and on the other side, a real life horror show is taking place. My dearly beloved Gin cries out in agony as the man I thought to be an angel hovers over her. Panic sets in as I watch all the people in that room rush around in every direction as though they are ants, seemingly unsure of what to do next.

The angels once brilliantly white gown has become splattered with crimson. I do not understand how he can just stand idly by and allow her to suffer so much pain. I catch a glimpse into Gins eyes, and for a moment, she silently pleads with me to take the pain away. With a ton of pressure weighing on my chest, I pray to God that He may inflict the pain on me instead. It takes all I have not to cry.

In the room behind the glass wall, all has become still. I jump to my feet to investigate the disappearance of all the noise and commotion, only to see my Gin, lying in bed, shining with perspiration and taking long and exaggerated breaths. The instruments of life the angel had brought with him have become covered with the essence of that which kept this woman alive. As my mind turns over on itself, wondering what has happened, a door appears out of nowhere to the room behind the glass wall. As I step through the doorway, out of my nightmare, and into reality, I cannot believe my eyes. Before me are two women. One is Gin, and the other I have never before met, though I promise I will live and die by her.

As the angel approaches me, he removes the veil from his tired yet triumphant face and hands me something very gently. As I stand there, looking down into my own eyes, the Doctor tells Gin and I, "Congratulations, Mommy and Daddy, it's a girl!"



Photo by Karen Prescott

Contributors

Katie Anderson was the recipient of daughterhood at Finley Hospital in Dubuque, Iowa in October of 1978. Her mother's name is Jeanne. She now lives in Valparaiso, Indiana, has two cats named Sugar and Spice, and dreams of someday owning her own farm. If you passed her on the street someday you wouldn't think her remarkable, but she would still smile at you.

Sue Antoszewski is pursuing a Bachelor of Behavioral Science Degree with an emphasis in psychology. She would like to eventually work within the Department of Corrections either in probation or parole. She currently tutors in various subjects for Student Support Services. This is her third year being published in Purdue's Portals.

Terri Bartels is a senior who is working towards her bachelor's degree in elementary education. She occupies many positions: student, employee, homemaker, daughter, sibling, wife, mother, grandmother, pet-owner, friend and writer. In her spare time she enjoys gardening, which she views as her way of writing on the Earth's surface. Terri looks forward to passing on her love of reading and writing to her students.

Kenneth Bernard is twenty-eight years old and has been writing for the better part of fifteen years. He first began writing poetry when he was only thirteen years old. Poetry has always been his first love, though now he writes mostly short stories. His love for writing and the ability to express thoughts and emotions that envelope and propel him to write for those who also passionately feel the words has grown so deep that the reader may mistake those words for someone whispering in their ear the sweet, alluring lullaby that their mind has convinced them is true. He hopes to continue touching the lives of those who read what he has to say.

Angela M. Clark has been attending PNC part-time since the fall of 1998 and is now a junior (finally). She thanks her family and friends for their patience. Angela is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Studies, concentrating in English and the humanities. She loves to read and finds her spiritual nourishment in the world of poetry. She believes that the world around us is full of hidden poems, and as one of her favorite poets says, "what we have to do is live in a way that lets us find them." (Naomi Shihab Nye).

Brenda Green Darrol is a junior working toward a Bachelor Degree in Behavioral Science. Her strong interest in sociology demanded that she explore the social constructs that facilitate violence; any adequate explanation must be psychosocial. She remains intrigued by stratification, the social construction of race, stigma, and prescribed roles. Brenda has participated in the Class Works Forum, Alpha Sigma Lambda, Portals Aloud and More. . . , and is a new parent in contact with the Northwest Indiana Down Syndrome Association.

Erica M. Maar, a part-time student majoring in behavioral science with an emphasis on sociology, has returned to college after a ten year hiatus. She has found returning to be incredibly rewarding due to the newfound sense of direction and purpose that time has given her. Her full time job is raising her four children with her husband. She and her husband spend much of their spare time renovating their century-old farmhouse and adding gardens anywhere and everywhere. Amidst all the hustling and bustling, she loves sneaking away with a good book. Reading has always been a source of inspiration and fulfillment—a gift from her father, who insisted that there is always time for a book.

Shawn M. Pierce, currently studying business at PNC, plans on earning a master's degree in fine art/teaching. He wants his art to speak for itself, not be confined by words which sometimes can mislead the individual. Besides, he notes, an artist cannot choose what a painting will mean to someone else.

Tonya Marie Rogers, 27, is a part-time, first year student and a full-time restaurant manager. She has a husband, Matt, and a daughter named Madison. She is headed toward a degree in nursing. Tonya not only enjoys education but also enjoys hunting and fishing with her family. She wants to thank Professor Mellin for his positive feedback and encouragement to enter this writing contest. She'd also like to thank her mom for her continued support and her husband for putting up with the stress and strain of a working and studying wife.

James Spaulding is a graduating senior at Purdue University North Central's Westville Correctional Institute. After graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts, James hopes to pursue his Master's Degree in Urban Development. He claims that his writings and linguistic expressions are fueled from two passions: 1) his children, Daniel Scott and Jessica Lynn and 2) from the adversity life has imposed upon him. James hopes to inspire other writers to stress the parameters of language. He encourages creative and visionary writing from students who desire to express their soul through the use of symbols. He also extends his gratitude to the faculty at PNC who, he says, "Have believed in me and helped me realize my true potential."

Suzanne Weber is a junior pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English at PNC. She is currently the editor of *The Spectator*, PNC's student newspaper. She is also a tutor in the Writing Center. Suzanne is active in the Dean's Leadership Group, the Campus Appeals Board and the President's Roundtable. She plans to attend graduate school and eventually earn a doctorate. Suzanne aspires to become either an English or journalism professor and work part-time for a newspaper. Suzanne would like to thank God and her family for their support, inspiration and guidance. She would also like to thank PNC for choosing to publish her photographs in *Portals*.

Eric Westforth is a full-time student at PNC, where he hopes to someday major in something. Eric also works installing cable television and Internet. No, he will not hook you up for free. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, kayaking, and playing disc golf, but his *raison d'être* is thinking up clever bios for literary magazines.

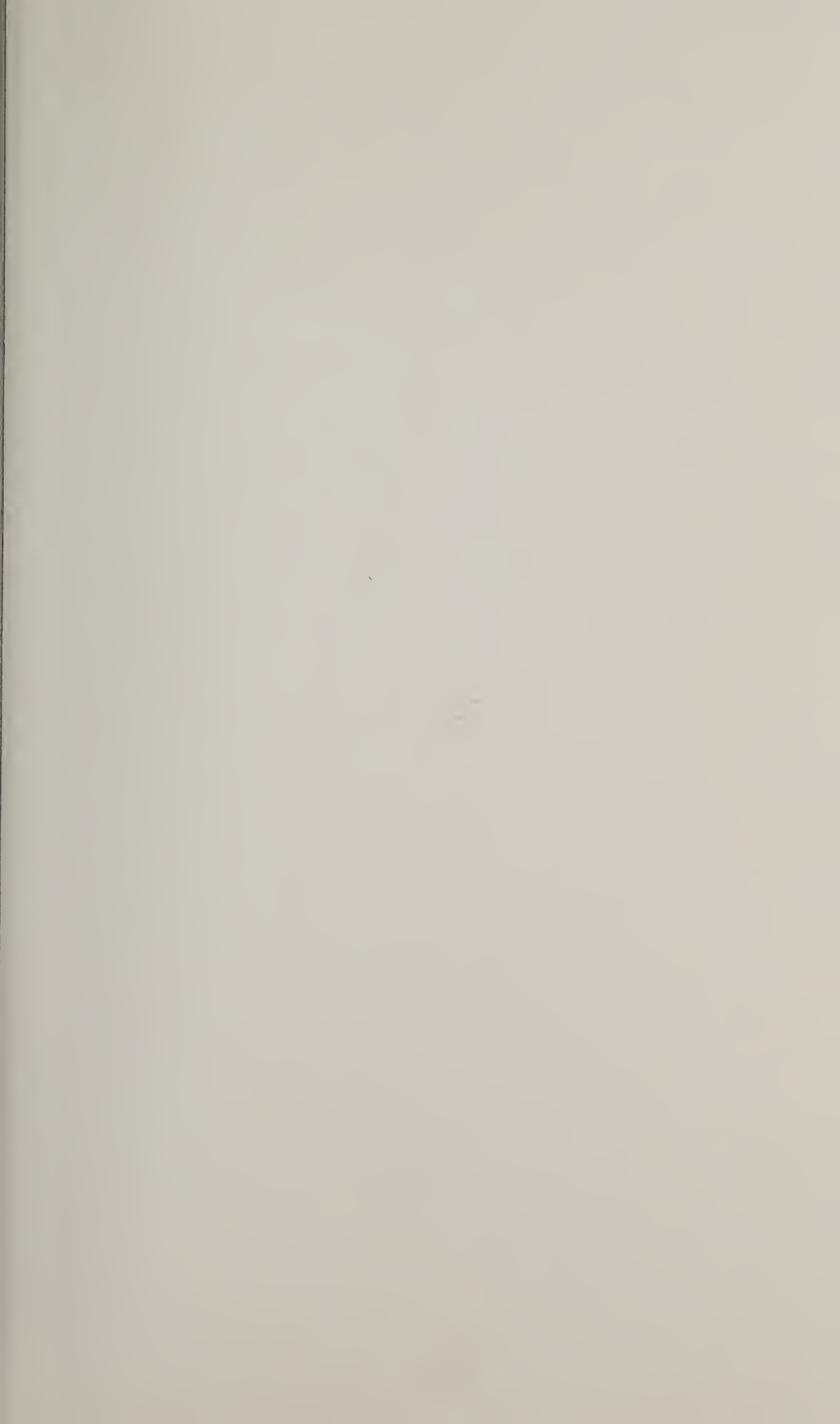
Belinda Wheeler is a junior student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English at PNC and hopes to become an English professor in the future. Belinda would like to thank all the students and faculty that have continued to make her feel welcome. On a personal note, Belinda would like to thank Prof. Beth Rudnick and Dr. Susan Hillabold for their words of wisdom; Barb Austin for her continuing encouragement, guidance and friendship; and her friends and family back home in Australia for their care packages, love, and emotional support.

Carol Wilson is a private person. She lives in Valparaiso with her daughter and has two more years at PNC.

Cassandra Zurawski is relieved to be finishing her last year at PNC. She has been president of the Golden Quill for about three years and has loved every minute of it. She is proud to be having her first book, a fantasy novel entitled *Aviar: Shadows of Destiny*, published under the pen name Cassandra Lynn. She hopes to write and publish more books in the future and work for a publisher.



Purdue North Central's Sunflower Field
Photo by Karen Prescott



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